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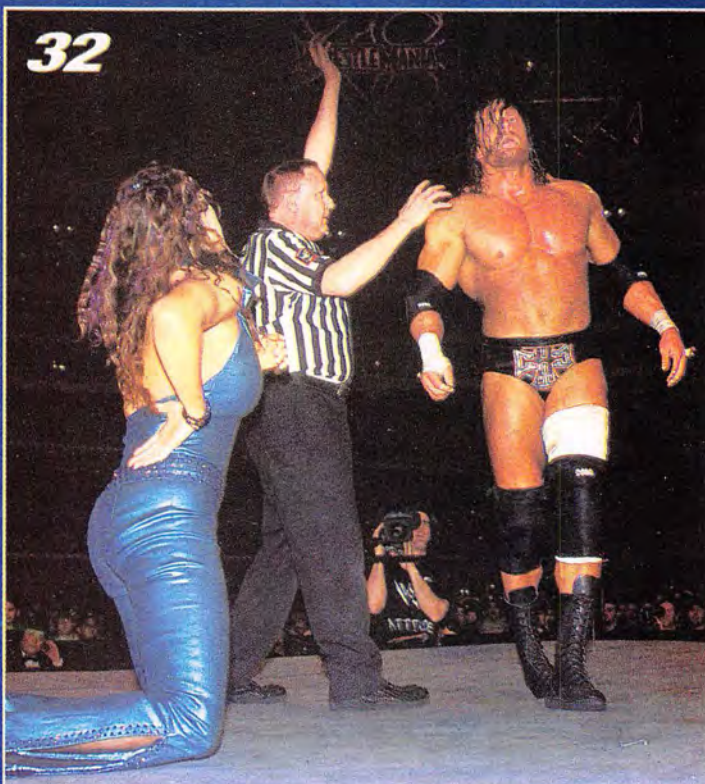
# inside wrestling

THE MAGAZINE THAT RIPS THE LID OFF PRO WRESTLING

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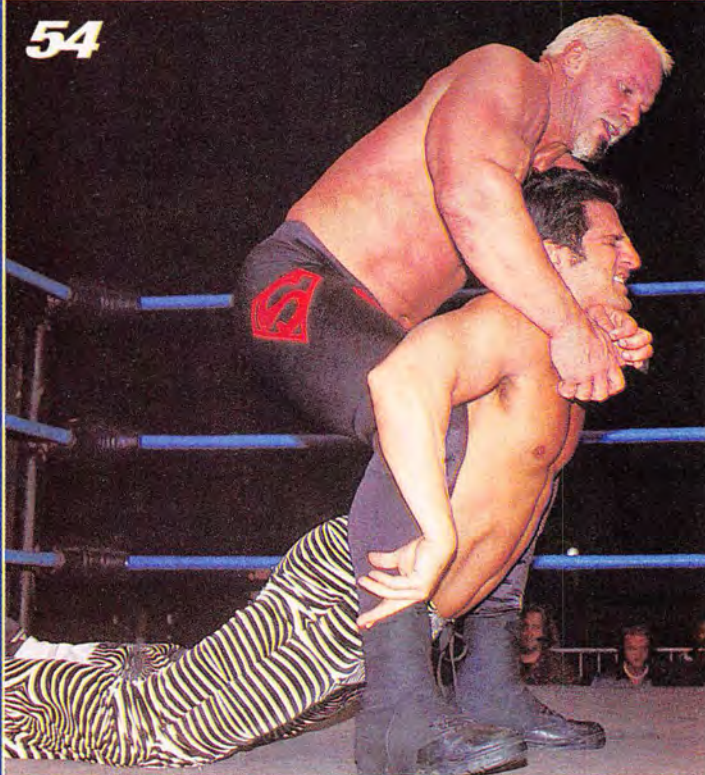
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COVER PHOTOS:  
Triple-H by Joe Zanolle

COVER DESIGN:  
Natalie Burke

Look for the October 2002 issue of  
INSIDE WRESTLING, on sale July 23



## **NICE GIG**

I think the NWO has been a lot of fun to watch in the WWF so far. I wasn't looking forward to seeing Hulk Hogan again, to be quite honest, but my thinking changed after that awesome confrontation he had with The Rock right after the NWO debuted. That was right up there with the segment where Steve Austin went after Mike Tyson as the best stuff I've ever seen on *Raw*.

The only thing I'm having a problem understanding is what purpose Kevin Nash is serving. As I write this letter, WrestleMania is only 10 days away, and Nash doesn't have a match. Why bring him in a month before the biggest show of the year and not sign him to a match? I wish I

could get a job like Nash has and get paid what he's getting.

RYAN CURRAN  
Casner, IL

## **COLORFUL LETTER**

I'm glad Hulk Hogan got to return to the WWF. It would have been a shame if the last memory people had of him as a wrestler was from Bash at the Beach 2000, when he had that blowup with Vince Russo. I hope when Hogan is through with the WWF this time, he walks away after a big win while wearing the red and yellow.

DONNA PETERSEN  
Memphis, TN

## **DON'T HATE "THE GAME"**

You guys disrespected Triple-H with the story that was published in the June 2002 issue ("Triple-H: It's Okay To Hate Him Again!"). Just because Hunter was the best heel the WWF had since Bret Hart doesn't mean he has to be a heel to be great. Look at how good he was when he was the leader of DX. That group was unbelievably popular, and Triple-H fed off the crowd reactions he got back then.

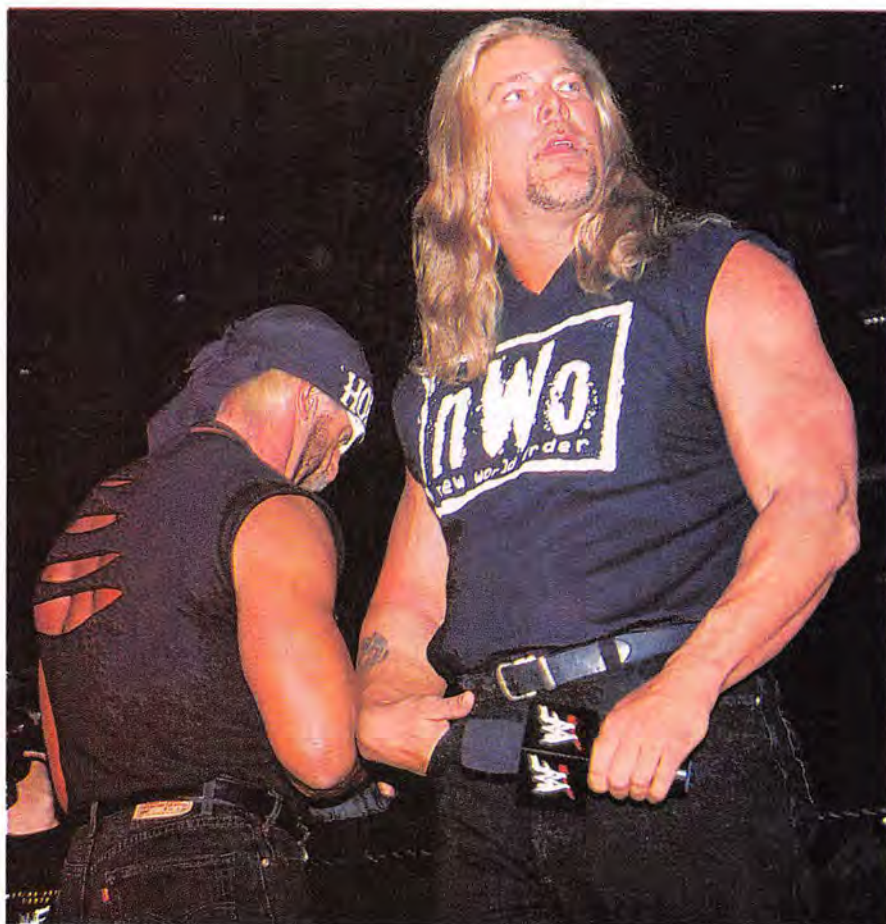
My guess is the quadriceps injury Triple-H had and all the time he had to be spend rehabbing it will make him more determined to be even better than he was before he got hurt. And I see no reason for him to turn heel again. Even if he wanted to, no one is going to boo him as long as he's against Stephanie.

BILL ADARIO  
St. Louis, MO

## **YEAR TO FORGET**

I've gone to the ECWA's Super 8 tournament the last four years, and I always enjoy watching it as much as any card in any federation. But I was a little disappointed this year that Charlie (R.C.) Haas didn't get to participate in it. I hadn't heard before-

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Kevin Nash did a fair amount of talking, but no wrestling during his first few weeks back in the WWF, and he didn't even get a match at WrestleMania. Reader Ryan Curran wonders why he had such a light workload.





Less than three months after his brother, Russ, died so tragically, Charlie (R.C.) Haas tore the ACL in his right knee. Rita Gerish is hoping Haas will find the strength to get through these difficult times.

hand that he blew out his knee and wouldn't be able to wrestle, but it was nice of him to still show up for the show and come out to the ring to address the crowd.

It was sad seeing him walk to the ring in such pain. I remember I was heartbroken when I found out his brother and tag team partner, Russ, died in December. Then, just a few months later, this has to happen. I hope Charlie is able to get through these terrible times and doesn't ever give up his dream of making it to the WWF.

RITA GERISH  
Bucktown, MD

### GIVING UP SO SOON?

I'm a disappointed about how the careers of Edge and Christian have gone since they split up. I thought Christian was going to surprise everybody and go on to have a better singles career than Edge, but neither one of them is doing too well. Think about this: Going into WrestleMania, you had Edge getting outsmarted by

William Regal every time they wrestled, then getting into a feud with Booker T over a Japanese shampoo commercial. And you had Christian losing almost every single one of his matches, throwing stupid temper tantrums because of it, then buying into DDP's power of positive thinking routine.

Wasn't this supposed to be the year that at least one of the two showed how well he could do on his own? I think it's time for them to follow the lead of the Hardys and reunite as a tag team. The tag team division could use a boost, and so could Edge and Christian.

RAY CHEADLE  
Whaleyville, VA

(Continued on page 82)



First Christian lost the European title to Dallas Page, then he went into a miserable slump, then he began palling around with DDP. Given that his former partner Edge has also been struggling on his own, reader Ray Cheadle believes an E & C reunion is in order.

# INSIDE Wrestling®

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By Harry Burkett

**W**HEN **LINDA McMAHON** announced the implementation of a "brand extension" for the World Wrestling Federation on March 18, marking the first time that a major promotion will divide itself into two distinct leagues, she was careful not to use the term "promotional split." The WWF doesn't want to give the impression that the *Raw* and *Smackdown* leagues will be watered down. From their point of view, both *Raw* and *Smackdown* will benefit from an influx of new and returning talent, including former **Alliance** members and the tremendous number of young stars waiting in the Ohio Valley Wrestling and Heartland Wrestling Association pipelines. The WWF has

already promoted **Brock Lesnar** and **Rico Constantino** (the new "stylist" for **Billy Gunn** and **Chuck Palumbo**).

"This is a risky venture, but also a very exciting one," said WWF analyst **Thomas Pilliard**, placing the brand extension in perspective. "Then again, it isn't nearly as risky as the two projects that grabbed headlines last year, namely the XFL and WCW. The XFL required a large financial investment on the part of the WWF and NBC, and they lost a total of about \$70-million as a result. And, while the WCW purchase cost only \$2.5-million, the WWF would have had the burden of resuscitating its damaged brand name. At least this way, the McMahons can exploit the full worth of the WWF brand name while having two promotions at the same time—and it will be a relatively low cost effort."

Interestingly, Linda McMahon's announcement came a full year after WWFE's purchase of WCW. When that sale occurred on March 20, 2001, the McMahons expected to operate it as a separate promotion within a few months, but their reluctance to woo former WCW main-eventers from pricey AOL Time Warner contracts made that a riskier proposition. The McMahons concluded a WWF brand extension was the best course of action last November, but waited five months, until after WrestleMania X8, to implement it.

Added Pilliard: "Some fans need a compelling reason to watch both *Raw* and *Smackdown* every week, and separating the roster is the most logical thing to do. With WWFE having a monopoly on cable-TV wrestling, it had to create its own alternative. This probably should have happened years ago, but the demise of WCW and ECW made it much easier."

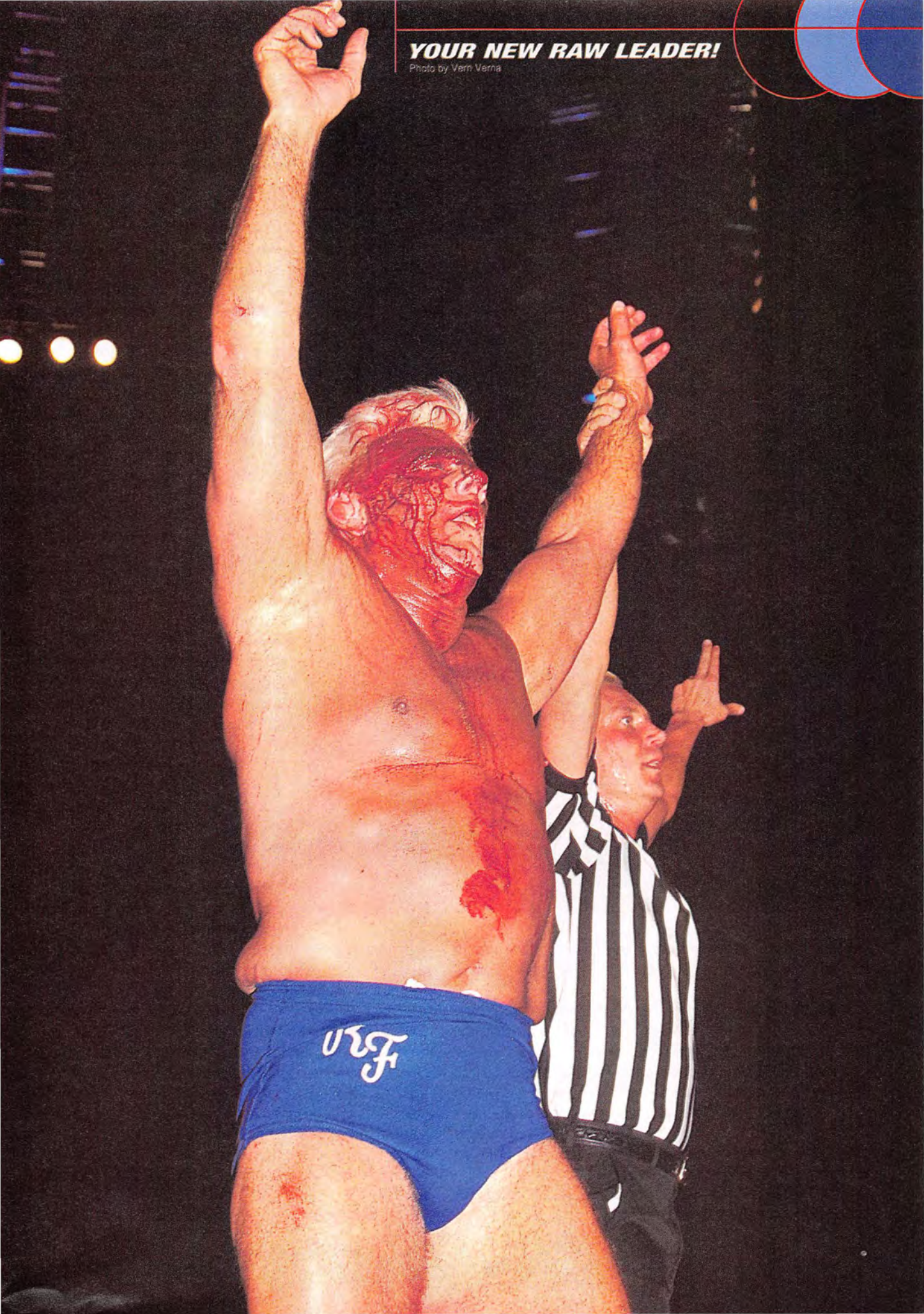
As of press time, it is uncertain how the draft will enable the rosters to take shape, but, in an interview with the *Toronto Sun*, Vince McMahon indicated that he and other family members might join his son, **Shane**, in lowering their on-air profiles. "All these storylines basically have a shelf life and [as for] the McMahon ones, it just happens they're all very good performers, both Shane and Stephanie," he said. "They both actually prefer being on the other side of the camera, producing and directing. I prefer that as well





**YOUR NEW RAW LEADER!**

Photo by Vern Verna





Morgan was super at the Super 8



because you can live vicariously through all your performers instead of having the spotlight put on you, which is uncomfortable a lot of times."

Yes, Vinnie Mac seemed really uncomfortable forcing **William Regal** and **Jim Ross** to kiss his ass a few months ago. You have to watch those shy types.

McMahon had to feel comfortable with *WrestleMania X8*, the WWF's most successful pay-per-view ever. On March 17, a crowd of 68,237 fans attended the event at the Sky-Dome in Toronto, a record for that facility. It edged out the sellout attendance for *WrestleMania VI*—with *The Ultimate Warrior* vs. *Hulk Hogan* as the main event, also at the Sky-Dome—by 559 people. Gate receipts set another record for WWFE, with a staggering \$3.9-million (U.S.).

The **Rock's** defeat of **Hulk Hogan**, **Steve Austin's** win over **Scott Hall**, and **Triple-H's** undisputed WWF World title victory over **Chris Jericho** were among the major results at the pay-per-view. For an in-depth analysis of *WrestleMania X8's* *real* winners and losers, check out our special section on page 32.

In the weeks leading to 'Mania, some people observed that Triple-H seemed a bit slower in the ring following the quadriceps injury that put him out of action for eight months. Would "The Game" be able to perform at the same level that earned him MVP status on past pay-per-views? He addressed the matter on *wwf.com*, stating, "My wind is not where I want it to be, but that just takes time. You can do all the cardiovascular in the world; it doesn't get you in shape like being in the ring does. The only thing that gets you in shape for being in the ring is being in the ring. And that's just time."

Judging from *WrestleMania X8*, I'd say Triple-H is the wind beneath our ring again. Sorry, dear readers, I couldn't resist.

Congratulations to Pro Wrestling NOAH's **Donovan Morgan**, who won the sixth annual Super 8 tournament in Wilmington, Delaware, in March. He used a devastating blend of American and Japanese-style wrestling to overwhelm **Pepper Parks** in the opening round, pin **Jamie Knoble** in the semifinals, and outlast **A.J. Styles** in the final. "I've been all around the world—from California to Japan and back again—and I've never seen such an impressive group of talent as I did at the Super 8," said the former All Pro Wrestling universal champion. "It gives me that much more satisfaction to know I went through them all."

In other exciting tournament matches at the Super 8, **Red** pinned **Bobby Rude**, Knoble beat **Matt Stryker**, Styles pinned **Xavier**, and Styles defeated Red. Also at the show, ECWA champion **Scot Andrews** beat perennial Florida rival **Billy Fives** in a ladder match, and **Prince Nana** won the "Summit," an annual Royal Rumble-style event to determine the top contender to the heavyweight title.

Since the Super 8, Andrews has suffered a broken leg and will miss four to six months, and **Pepper Parks**—last year's number 500 in the "*PWI* 500"—has announced his retirement. For all the details of the 2002 Super 8, check out the feature on the event in our "Supercards" (August 2002) issue of *PWI*.

Fortunately, Morgan has signed with NOAH and not



Frontier Martial Arts Wrestling, which has ceased operations after 12 years in the business. Based in Tokyo, FMW could have been described as Japan's version of ECW. In fact, FMW exchanged talent with ECW from 1998 to 2001, with stars such as **Masato Tanaka**, **Atsushi Onita**, **Hayabusa**, **Jinsei Shinzaki**, **Gedo**, and **Jado** making American appearances.

FMW served as the proving ground for future main-eventers such as **Mike Awesome** (then known as **The Gladiator**) and **Sabu**. **Terry Funk** and **Mick Foley** headlined several FMW shows. The hardcore promotion tried to tame its image in recent years and lost its fan base to Big Japan and others. Financial problems began to surface in early-2001, and the final blow came when its top performer, Hayabusa, was paralyzed as a result of injuring his neck in a spill onto the concrete floor.

**Marcus Jordan's** change in persona must be working. Formerly known as "The Black Dragon," the Maryland Championship Wrestling star transformed into "The Supermodel" and immediately won the MCW Rage TV title. Not to be outdone, his brother, **Orlando**, upset **The Bruiser** for the MCW heavyweight belt on February 9 in Lexington, Ken-

tucky, during a co-promotional card with Southeastern Championship Wrestling.

Orlando's good fortune didn't last. One week later, **The Bruiser** T-boned him through a table to capture his fifth

## NEWS ANALYSIS

**RAW VS. SMACKDOWN.** The talent draft preceding the WWF's brand extension is supposed to ensure parity between the two promotions, like Major League Baseball's American and National Leagues. I was hoping for an "uneven split," with one promotion becoming a renegade group, boasting an entirely different philosophy geared toward experimentation—something with Paul Heyman's vision and Vince McMahon's polish.

**SUPER TIME AT THE SUPER 8.** I had the good fortune of witnessing the Super 8 live this year, along with other INSIDE WRESTLING editors and writers. Any of those eight participants is capable of wrestling in the WWF someday, and maybe sooner rather than later. Former Super 8 entrants—including **The Hardy Boyz**, **Scotty Too Hotty**, and **Billy Kidman**—have already proven that it's an attainable goal.

**TITLE CHAOS REIGNS.** Mad magazine did a hilarious send-up of pro wrestling nearly 20 years ago. Among the benefits of being a wrestler, it listed, "Wrestling's a sport in which everybody can be a champion." It had a cartoon of about 30 wrestlers wearing belts, engraved with promotion names such as "WWF," "WWW," and "WUSS." I'm glad NWA Tri-State and Mason-Dixon Wrestling are merging titles to improve that image.

**CEO GONE B-A-D.** Victoria Van Ellen has spent many years as the distinguished CEO of NWA New England, which made her heel turn very effective—just as Vince McMahon's was effective four years ago. Perhaps the fact that she happens to be a female executive will put a different spin on it. Let's hope Linda McMahon doesn't hear about this situation. I don't think her cue-card delivery would mesh with the NWO.

**IS HONESTY REALLY THE BEST POLICY?** Jesse Ventura would rather give cutting one-liners than be politically correct. He admits money is a motivating factor in life. Ventura says what he thinks. In polls, nearly all Americans—including Minnesotans—insist they want to get rid of pandering politicians in favor of individuals who speak their minds. If that's true, why have Minnesotans rewarded Ventura with a dismal 49 percent approval rating?



Marcus Jordan: model of excellence in MCW



MCW championship during a bloody no-disqualification brawl in Harrington, Delaware. Doesn't the MCW title change hands in Maryland anymore?

NWA Tri-State champion **Magnum** went a long way toward completing the merger between NWA Tri-State and Mason-Dixon Wrestling during a March 8 show in Stone-wood, West Virginia. In an effort to consolidate the region's titles, he won a three-way match also involving Mason-Dixon heavyweight champion **Brock Singleton** and Mason-Dixon Tri-State champion **Mason Hunter**. (I hope you followed all those "Tri-States" and "Masons," my friends.) Anyway, Singleton protested the decision because Magnum's manager, **Just'n Kace**, distracted him by dragging away his valet, the lovely **Sasha**.

A three-way rematch was held the following day in Morgantown, West Virginia, where Mason Hunter claimed the NWA Tri-State/MDW unified championship.

News from NWA New England: At the promotion's "Broken Hearts, Broken Bones" show in Malden, Massachusetts, CEO **Victoria Van Ellen** shocked fans by revealing herself as a proponent of both, claiming to be the mysterious benefactor of the ruthless gang of cutthroats known as **The New Brotherhood** ... "**Boston Bad Boy**" **Jason Rumble** brought the NWA junior heavyweight title back to New England by defeating **Rocky Reynolds**. Rumble proposed to his girlfriend of seven years immediately afterward; she

accepted. Talk about a win-win situation ... **Erich Sbraccia** and a chair outlasted nine other men in a Royal Rumble-style match, and he went on to beat former WCW wrestler **Rick Fuller** for the New England brass knuckles/hard-core belt.

This 'n' that: **Jerry** and **Jeff Jarrett** are planning to launch a national wrestling company, with pay-per-views being its main source of revenue. There's no word on how this will affect Jeff's status as WWA champion ... **David Flair** recently upset **Sean O'Haire** on Ohio Valley TV, thanks to outside distractions from **Mr. Black** and **Jacob Crony**. **The Prototype** made Flair (who upset Prototype several weeks earlier) regret it by jumping in the ring and flattening him with a Proto-plex, followed by a figure-four leglock. **Ric Flair** is expected to help his son battle O'Haire, Prototype, and the rest of **Bolin Services** in the near future ... Best-selling author Mick Foley has signed a deal with Knopf Ltd. to publish a novel, titled *Tietam Brown*, later in the year. He seems to be finished with the WWF for now ... **Sid Vicious**, who broke his leg in grisly fashion in January 2001, is planning to work as commissioner of the WWA. He is skeptical of his chances of signing with the WWF. His lawsuit against AOL Time Warner, which he holds liable for his injury, is pending ... A few months ago, I reported that **Van Hammer** had a side job as a car salesman. Now the versatile Hammer is selling commercial time for a Maryland radio station ... The WWF has recruited Florida radio sports host "**The Freak**" **Marc Loyd** to join its broadcast team.

From the No "Body" At Home Dept.: Minnesota Governor **Jesse Ventura**, whose approval rating plummeted from 70 percent one year ago to 49 percent in February, has already moved out of the governor's mansion. But that doesn't mean Ventura is necessarily that pessimistic regarding his chances for re-election. The governor's reasons are structural in nature: the 90-year-old Tudor mansion's incompatibility with his 6'4" frame, and the fact that it needs major renovations—the house, not Ventura.

It is uncertain whether Ventura took his favorite item from the mansion, a portrait of "The Body" wearing knightly armor and sitting atop a horse.

On a sad note, the wrestling industry mourns the recent losses of **Nelson Royal**, **Swede Hanson**, and MEWF star **Dino Casanova**. They will be missed.

Thanks for joining me again this issue. See you at the matches.

(Harry Burkett can be reached via e-mail at [HBurkettJr@excite.com](mailto:HBurkettJr@excite.com).)



Commissioner Vicious

Jason Rumble with C.J.

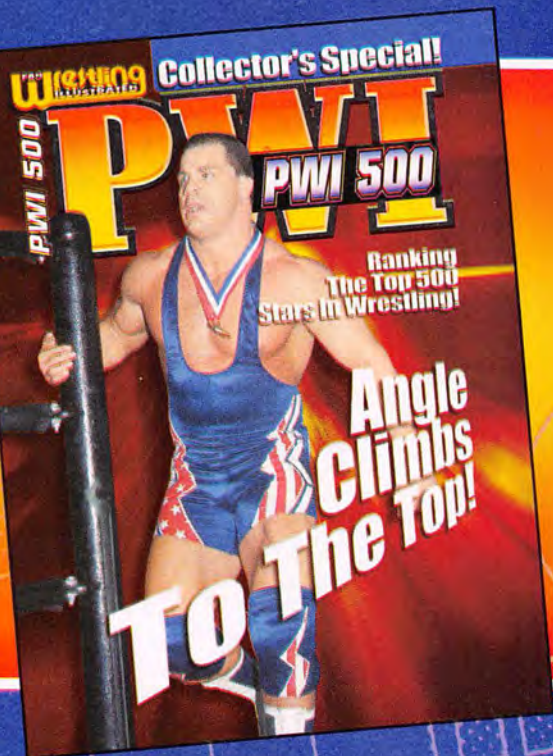




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## PROTO- TYPE

HEIGHT: 6'3"  
WEIGHT: 260

HOMETOWN: Los Angeles, CA  
GREATEST MOMENT TO DATE: It happened one week after he lost his first singles match in OVW to David Flair. On February 20, 2002, he shook off that stunning upset loss and beat Leviathan for the OVW title. Should be the first of many big title wins for this WWF developmental star

HE DOES IT SO WELL: Plays mind games. He claims to be the "perfect man." Hence the name Prototype. But he believes in himself and his abilities so much that he can use his arrogance to psych out opponents. Once matches start, he's usually adept at backing up his big mouth with a lot of action

WHERE HE NEEDS TO IMPROVE: He must take all opponents more seriously and realize that every match is a potential loss if he doesn't respect what his foe can do. He probably wouldn't have lost to David Flair if he showed him the proper respect and prepared for the match

PET FINISHER: Proto-plex

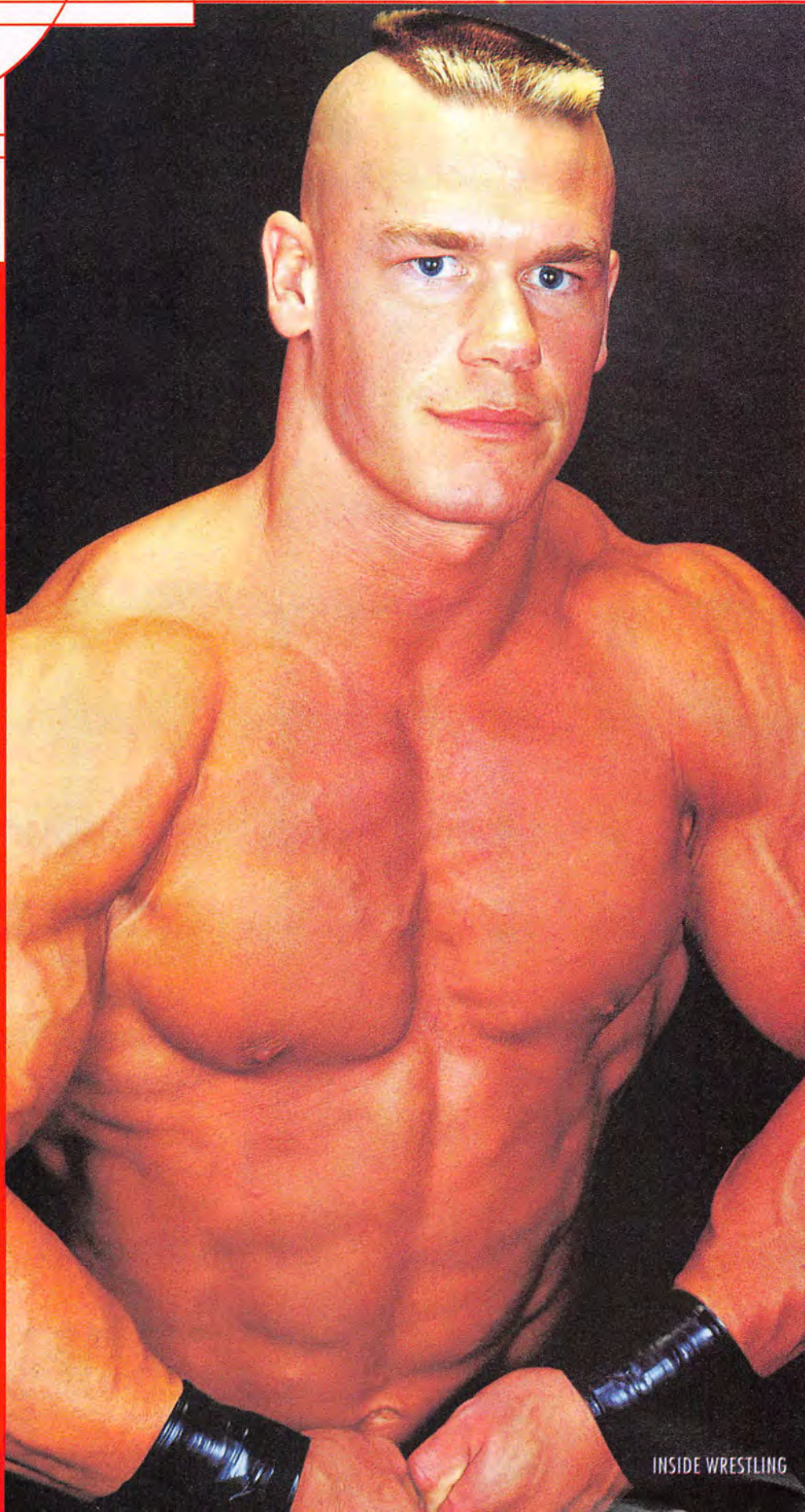
BIGGEST TEST TO DATE: Getting the title match with Leviathan was harder than you might think. He was dismissed as a blowhard for the longest time and had to put together a long winning streak to finally be taken seriously

OUTLOOK FOR 2002: Like all developmental wrestlers, a lot depends on how the split plays out. He has a lot of things the WWF likes: size, strength, a good look, and youth (he's only 23). Once he's given a chance to prove himself, he'll shine. He could even reach the I-C title level by year's end

QUICKIE EXPERT ANALYSIS:

"Everyone likes to compare him to a young Sting, but he doesn't go for the face paint and screaming and playing to the fans. He makes no bones about looking out for himself, and that's not necessarily a bad thing."

—OVW promoter Jim Cornette





## MR. PERFECT

HEIGHT: 6'2"  
WEIGHT: 235

HOMETOWN: Minneapolis, MN

GREATEST MOMENT TO DATE:

Fifteen years ago, before he was Mr. Perfect, Curt Hennig won his one and only world title by beating Nick Bockwinkel for the AWA championship. Many thought it'd be the first of many world title wins. But hey, many great wrestlers never capture a single one

HE DOES IT SO WELL: He's still a smooth technician, a tremendous chain wrestler who knows more holds and moves than most WWF superstars. What makes him all the more dangerous is the fact that he is so cunning. He knows when to use specific counters and when he can get away with cheating

WHERE HE NEEDS TO IMPROVE: Hennig needs to reinvent himself somehow. The Mr. Perfect persona seems passe in 2002.

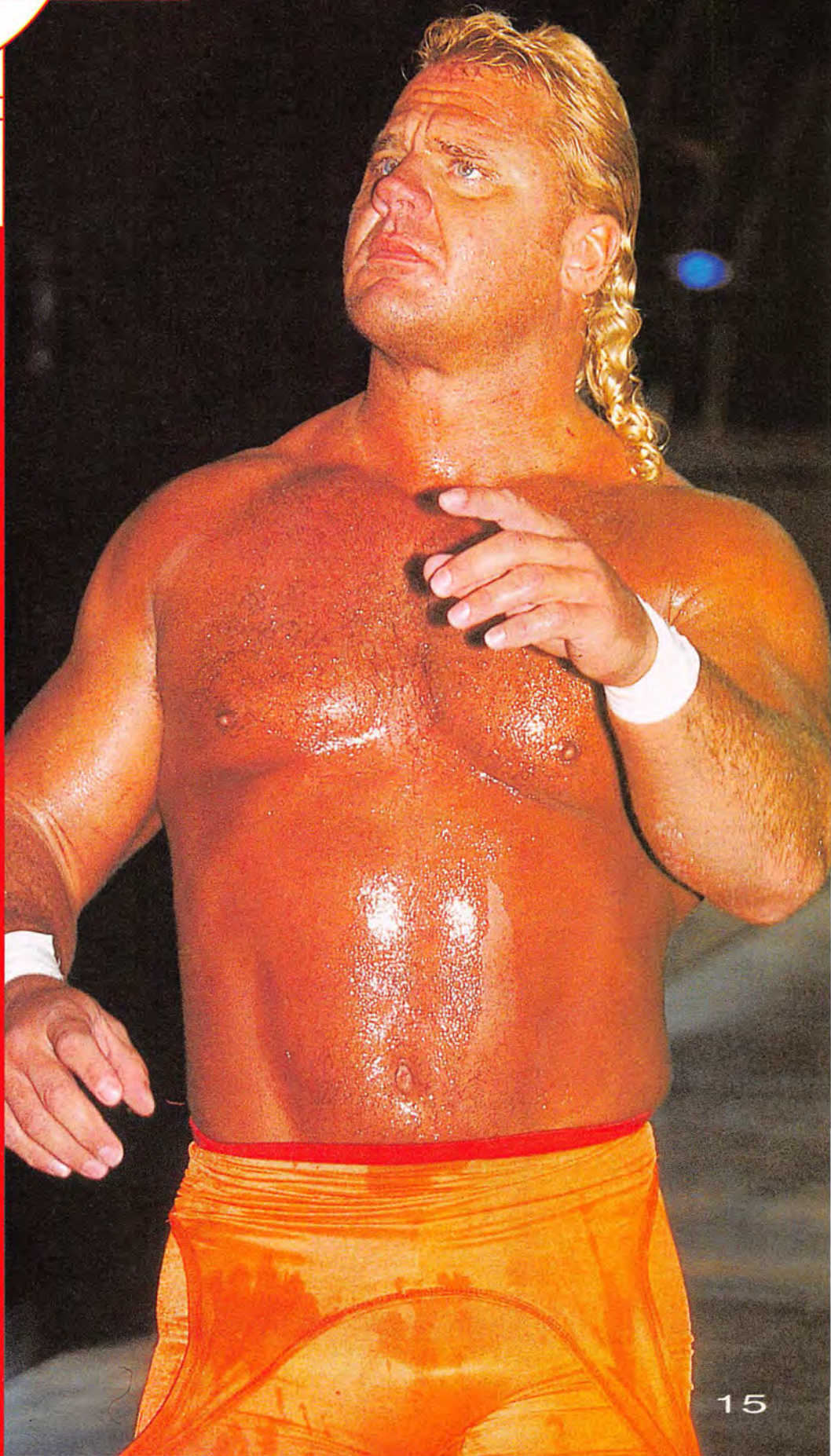
PET FINISHER: Perfect-plex (fisherman suplex)

BIGGEST TEST TO DATE: He had been out of action for several years due to back problems and was seemingly retired when he signed with WCW in 1997 and returned at the Bash at the Beach pay-per-view. He quickly re-established himself as one of the sport's top players and was U.S. champ within two months. That's a comeback for you!

OUTLOOK FOR 2002: It's not quite as promising as it was when he returned to the WWF at the Royal Rumble. He has looked decent in his few high-profile matches in 2002, but hardly spectacular. He should have more chances to distinguish himself after the split

QUICKIE EXPERT ANALYSIS: "Mr. Perfect is at the stage of his career where some people maybe don't look at him as a serious threat. I don't think they could be more wrong. He's gonna surprise some people in the WWF."

—Arn Anderson





With Dave Lenker

**A**LMOST NEVER made it to Las Vegas for WWA: The Revolution. Matt Brock, that old curmudgeon of a wrestling reporter, tried to steal the assignment. Every time he hears the words "Las Vegas," he perks up like a school-girl preparing for prom night. His heart gets all aflutter, his breath becomes labored, and his blood pressure rises. Suddenly he finds that "please" and "thank you" are actually part of his vocabulary.

If it wasn't so pathetic, I'd have to laugh at him.

But there was no way that I was going to give up this assignment, no matter how many problem-free columns he was offering. We ended up finding a little extra money in the travel budget, so both of us made the trip. I caught a later flight, though. Traveling with Mr. Brock is not a lot of fun.

Like Matt, I like Vegas. It's a fun town. There are plenty

of things to see and do. You can gamble, you can party, or you can just lay back and see the sights.

Or, if you're a wrestling reporter like I am, you can go and take in the first-ever live pay-per-view from the World Wrestling All-Stars promotion.

I wasn't really sure what to expect. Wrestling pay-per-views in Vegas have always seemed a little bit out of place to me. I've always pictured the city to be too tourist-driven to support a pay-per-view. Families, couples, and friends pop in and out for weekends. Generally they're not traveling there to take in a wrestling pay-per-view, especially one that's promoted by a company that barely anyone knows anything about and one that features wrestlers that haven't been seen on the national stage for quite some time or, in some cases, ever.



The WWA's first U.S. pay-per-view featured a few good matches, like the six-way cruiserweight bout featuring Shark Boy and Tony Mamaluke (left), and some bad ones, like the pointless Kronik vs. Native Blood showdown (above). The bad outweighed the good, according to Dave Lenker.

Photos by Steve Beyer



Needless to say, I was skeptical. The WWA had been advertising some high-profile names, but nobody was really sure if any of the names advertised would actually show up.

Some didn't.

Randy Savage backed out at the last minute because his advisers, well, advised him to back out. I saw reports that Savage wanted a guaranteed multimillion-dollar contract and that WWA officials responded by offering Savage a percentage of ownership in the company. In the end, they couldn't come to terms and Savage sat the pay-per-view out.

Road Dogg was also advertised for the show, but personal problems kept him away. Go figure.

Even with the absences of Savage and Road Dogg, the pay-per-view still featured some heavy hitters. Bret Hart was there in his role of WWA commissioner. Jeff Jarrett was there to defend the WWA heavyweight title against Brian "Grandmaster Sexay" Christopher. "Big Poppa Pump" Scott Steiner was also on board, though the only thing he did was cut a promo that WCW Standards and Practices never would have let fly, competed in a one-man midget tossing competition, and beat the hell out of Disco Inferno.

Other luminaries included Eddie Guerrero, Jerry Lynn, Rick Steiner, Ernest "The Cat" Miller, Kronik, Sabu, Devon Storm (Crowbar), and Nova, along with a couple of other former WCW wrestlers. There were a handful of independent standouts thrown in, too.

On paper, that lineup didn't look so bad. Actually, it looked pretty damn good. It's certainly not a bad locker room for a startup promotion.

That's why it's so unfortunate that the pay-per-view ended up being a yawner. The WWA had a chance to impress us all. Instead, Revolution made us realize that the WWA has a ways to go before it becomes the next ECW, let alone competition for the WWF.

The opening cruiserweight match, featuring six of the most talented independent wrestlers not under WWF contract, was easily the best match of the night. Nova, Christopher Daniels, Low-Ki, Tony Mamaluke, Shark Boy, and A.J. Styles all busted out every move in their repertoires—and



Disco Inferno was entertaining (most of the time) when he was in WCW, and he put on a good show at the WWA's Revolution as well. Unfortunately, though, he was little more than a sideshow at this PPV.

they looked excellent doing so. One thing about this match did leave me scratching my head, though: The broadcast team of Mark Madden and Jeremy Borash kept pointing out that these six guys were all vying for attention from various promotions.

They are? Why is that? Is the WWA so short on self-confidence that even WWA officials believe that these guys aren't competing for a WWA deal?

As Hurricane Helms would say, "Whatsupwiddat?"

Out next was WWA Commissioner Bret Hart. After saying that he was picking Brian Christopher to meet Jarrett in the main event for Jarrett's WWA title, Hart lost the crowd by bragging about how Team Canada had beaten Team U.S.A. in the gold medal game of the Olympic hockey tournament earlier in the day. In

order to get the American crowd back on his side, Hart had to revert to badmouthing Osama bin Laden.

And we thought Mick Foley had the market cornered on cheap pops.

The rest of the pay-per-view followed suit. Appearances that could have been used to make pay-per-view buyers look forward to purchasing a second one fizzled out quickly. Kronik vs. Native Blood? No-name prelim guys on a WWA pay-per-view? Unnecessary.

Surprise appearances by Jerry Lynn (who had been released from his WWF contract only two days earlier), Rick Steiner, and Ernest Miller—as well as a mysterious and completely unrecognized appearance by Hiroyoshi Tenzan—kept things interesting, but it didn't make up for Savage's absence. Not to me anyway. And Larry Zbyszko's tirade against Vince McMahon and Chris Jericho was just plain ludicrous.

There were good things about the pay-per-view. We know there are independent workers who can go. We know that Eddie Guerrero is on the road back. We know that Mark Madden is still wrestling's funniest big man and that Disco Inferno continues to be the most entertaining former WCW wrestler to be shunned by the WWF.

And, hey, I got a free trip to Vegas and won a few bucks at the blackjack table. Can't beat that, right? □



# behind the dressing room door

With Frank Krewda

*"What has he done to wear so many scars?  
Does he change the course of rivers?  
Does he pollute the moon and stars?  
He's the neighborhood bully."*

—"Neighborhood Bully" by Bob Dylan

**H**ULK HOGAN AND I go back—way back. My first encounter with the man occurred in August 1979. I had pestered my mother so relentlessly during our week-long vacation that the poor woman probably figured the only way she could salvage any rest and/or relaxation was to take me to see the WWF at the Convention Center on Wildwood, New Jersey's, famed boardwalk and get it over with.

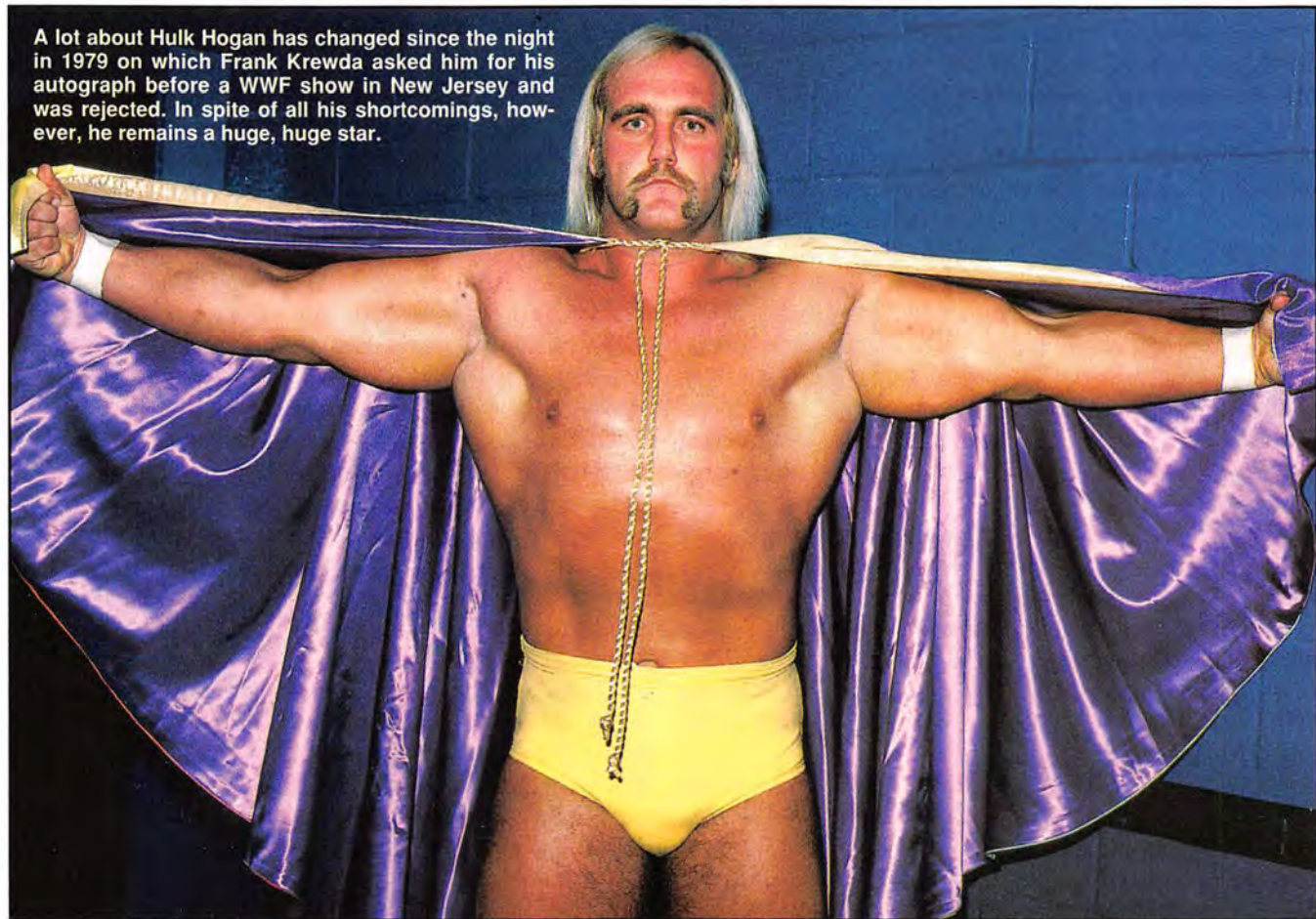
Had I anticipated that the show would change my nine-year-old mind about professional wrestling forever, I'd

have settled for another ride on the Tilt-A-Whirl. No, there weren't any death-defying falls from the top of a steel cage to blunt my sensitivity to violence. Nor did any surgically enhanced divas skewer my perception of women by jig-gling around the ring. Worse: Hulk Hogan refused to give me his autograph.

I remember the scenario like it was yesterday: En route to the men's room, I noticed a small crowd of women gathering at the building's rear exit. In the middle stood Hogan, resplendent in his Venice tan and amber shades. Turning a deaf ear to nature's call, I scrambled back to my seat, grabbed my program, and commanded my mother to produce a pen, pencil, or crayon—anything that would enable Hogan to put his name on my program.

"Let me see," my mother said, rifling through her handbag as I danced a jig in the aisle.

A lot about Hulk Hogan has changed since the night in 1979 on which Frank Krewda asked him for his autograph before a WWF show in New Jersey and was rejected. In spite of all his shortcomings, however, he remains a huge, huge star.





"C'mon, Ma. C'mon!"

"Wait. No, that's my eyeliner ... keys ... nope ... gum. What the hell is this?"

"Aw, c'mon, Ma!"

"Here you go," she said as she handed me a pen. "I don't know if it writes."

But I was already gone, shuffling toward Hogan's harem, quick enough to get there before any other autograph-seekers, but slow enough not to draw any attention to him. *After all*, I thought with proper childhood selfishness, *I saw him first!* As if my request for an autograph would make me a superior wrestling fan in Hulk's eyes.

Before I knew it, I was upon the throng and weaving my way through lots of long legs. I abruptly jammed the program into Hogan's thigh and, trying to shout above the din of the crowd, asked him for an autograph as politely as I could. Hogan looked down, acknowledged my presence, and resumed talking to the six lovelies who were suddenly transformed into eight or nine.

I poked him in the leg again and held up my pen. This time Hogan didn't even look down. For a while, I thought Hogan simply didn't hear me. So I tugged on his shirt and kept tugging until I finally got his attention.

"Sorry, little man, I can't," he growled.

*Sorry, little man, I can't?*

What did that mean? I didn't know what that meant, and I didn't want to know. What I did know was that Johnny Rodz signed autographs before his match. Tony Garea signed autographs before his match. Even the despised Greg Valentine signed a few before he wrestled. As far as I was concerned, Hogan could at least sign one: mine.

Gagging on my first real taste of rejection, I returned to my seat red-faced and obviously vexed.

"What's the matter?" my mother asked. "Did you get his autograph?"

"He wouldn't give it to me."

"Well, is he a good guy or a bad guy?" she asked after a few silent minutes.

"Bad guy," I muttered.

"Then of course he won't give you his autograph. Bad guys don't sign autographs. If anybody here saw him signing one for you, they'd never believe he's really a bad guy. They'd think he's a phony and forget about him just like that."

"Yeah, but ..."

"Just try to relax and enjoy the show."

Enjoy the show? Sweet lord! If only some of the current wrestling pundits could allow themselves to just enjoy the



When Hulk Hogan steps into the ring against someone like Rikishi, should anyone expect an outstanding display of athleticism? Not at all. Hogan isn't what he was in the ring five or 10 years ago, and a lot of people didn't think much of his matches then, either. But even though he's a heel, he still hears a lot of cheers from WWF crowds.

show. More specifically, enjoy Hulk Hogan for what remaining positives he still brings to professional wrestling—the mystique, the vibes, the legend.

Only a fool would deny that Hogan is technically woeful in the ring. So what else is new?! He's been throwing laughable legdrops for decades. And yes, Hogan is a master manipulator behind the scenes. But I think what happens on air is much more important. Apparently, the current breed of WWF fan agrees, even after years of brainwashing from the Fed and wrestling "insiders" who have forgotten all the things Hogan has done for the sport.

The pro-Hollywood cheers and chants you hear during *Raw* and *Smackdown* don't lie. As long as the fans are buying into Hogan at this point, magnifying his flaws is pointless. Hopefully, the return of Hogan to the WWF will signify a departure from all the "smart" reporting that threatens to stop the heartbeat of pro wrestling: suspension of disbelief.

Of course, some wrestlers out there (Billy Kidman perhaps) will still tell you Hulk Hogan is a cancer to professional wrestling. Obviously, they feel victimized by Hogan's power plays and acerbic tongue in a real-life way. And they're probably justified for feeling the way they do and for going public with their resentment.

But remember this: A lot of those same guys are headlining *Jakked* and *Heat* while Hogan headlined *WrestleMania X-8*. Now what do you think of that, brother? □



By Brandi Mankiewicz

*(The opinions expressed in "The Insider" are those of Brandi Mankiewicz alone and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of anyone else on the staff of this magazine.)*

**A** tale of two Strykers ... There's only one annual event that makes me tingle with pleasure every year. Okay, well, there are actually two. The second one is receiving a signature striped pink box with a black satin bow from Victoria's Secret for my birthday and finding it loaded with silky stuff. (My response to receiving anything silk from Victoria's Secret does qualify as an event—*trust* me.) Getting back to the first event, it's the Super 8 tournament.

Now, I've been lucky to be at every Super 8 since its inception. I've seen every injury, every tear shed as the winner hoists the trophy over his head. Back in 2000, I saw double. There were two sharks in the building: a not-too-shabby Mark "The Shark" Shrader and my favorite finned phenom, Shark Boy. This year, I walked in to find two Matt Strykers, one in the tournament, the other in the battle royal. It was like *deja vu* all over

again. Normally, I think of the ECWA as the SPCA for good wrestlers who are lost and need a home. Now, though, I'm thinking it's more like Noah's Ark.

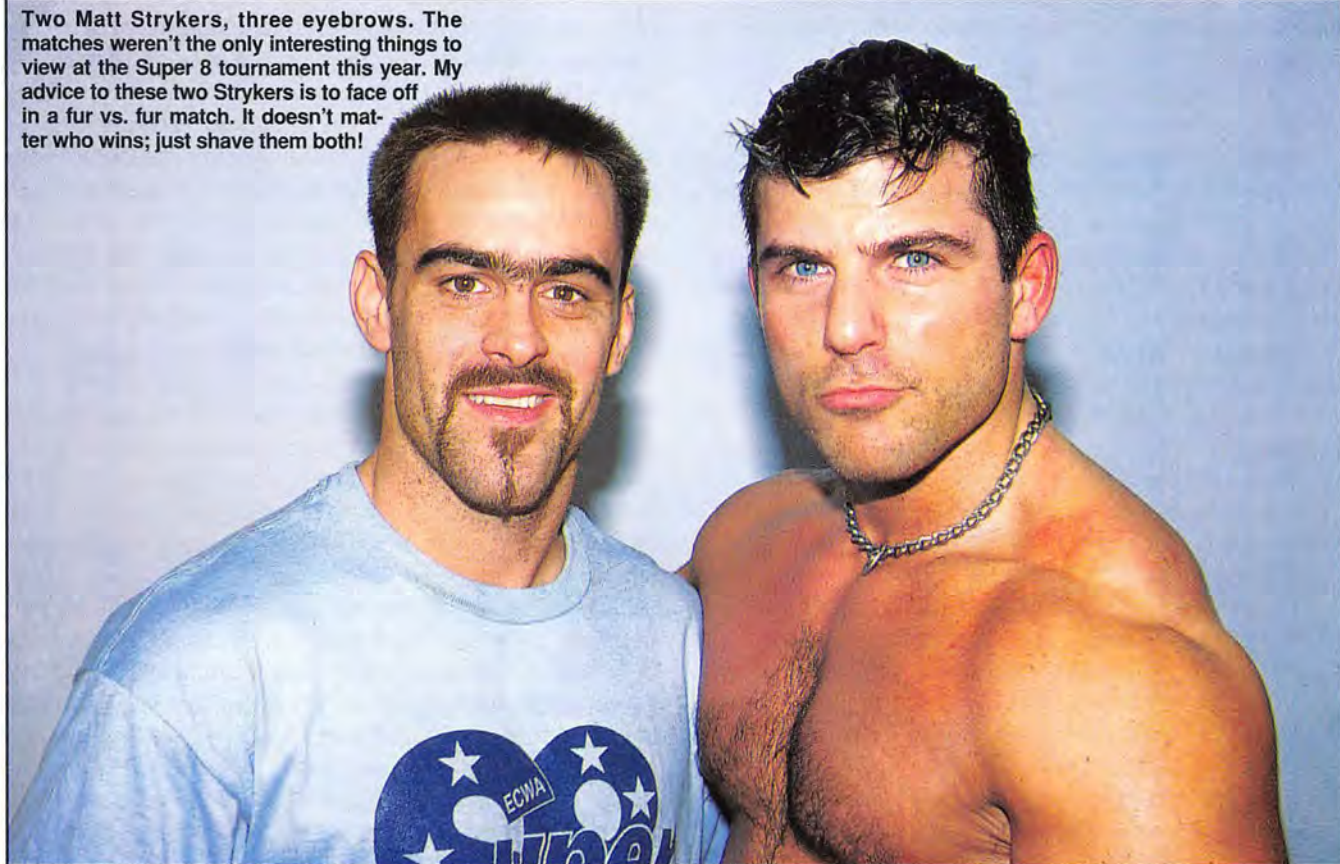
The names might be spelled the same, but there's no mistaking either Matt Stryker for the other. Both are accomplished wrestlers in their home regions of the country. For clarification in this column, the Matt Stryker from Ohio will be qualified as Stryker I, and Matt Stryker from New York as Stryker II. The main reason for Stryker I to be deemed as such started because he was the first Matt Stryker of which we had heard. But one look at Stryker I and it became obvious to me why the "one" fits him perfectly: the eyebrow.

Yep, I wrote that singularly and that is correct.

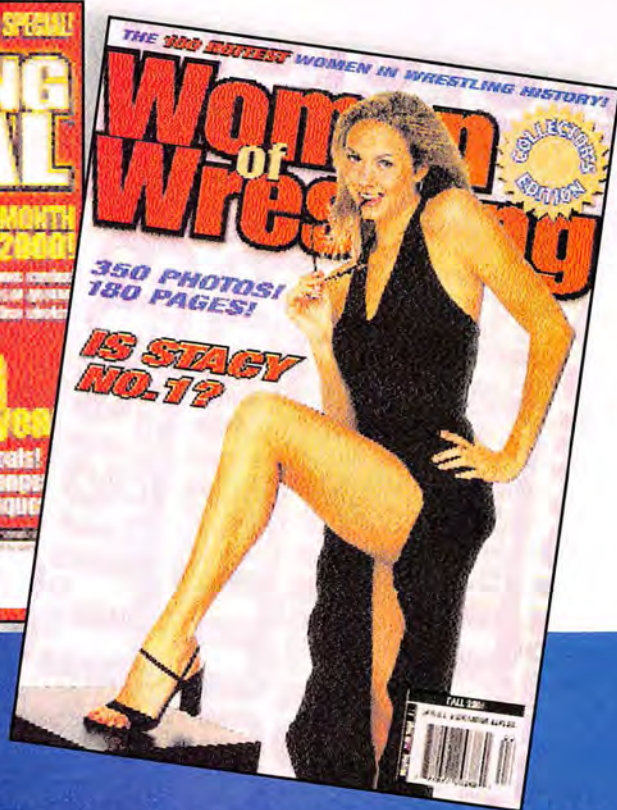
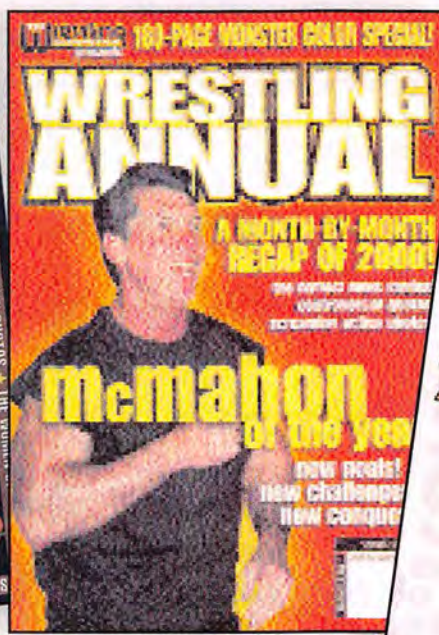
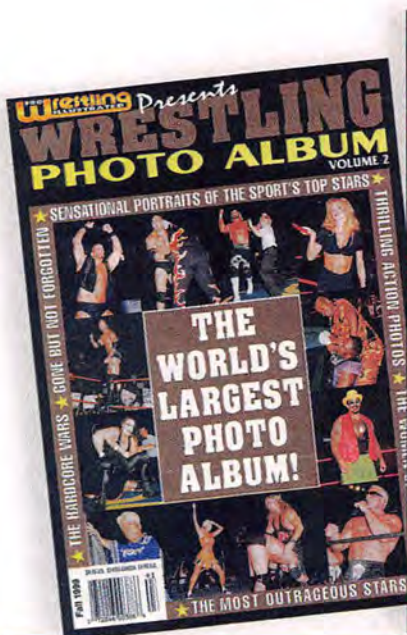
There's no denying that Stryker I is a hairy boy. He has lots of hair growing where it shouldn't—mainly in the demarcation zone that most normal people have between their eyebrows—and it has even spread to cover most of his face. Or, wait, is that a mustache and goatee? I don't know—it's hard to tell. Maybe if he

*(Continued on page 84)*

Two Matt Strykers, three eyebrows. The matches weren't the only interesting things to view at the Super 8 tournament this year. My advice to these two Strykers is to face off in a fur vs. fur match. It doesn't matter who wins; just shave them both!







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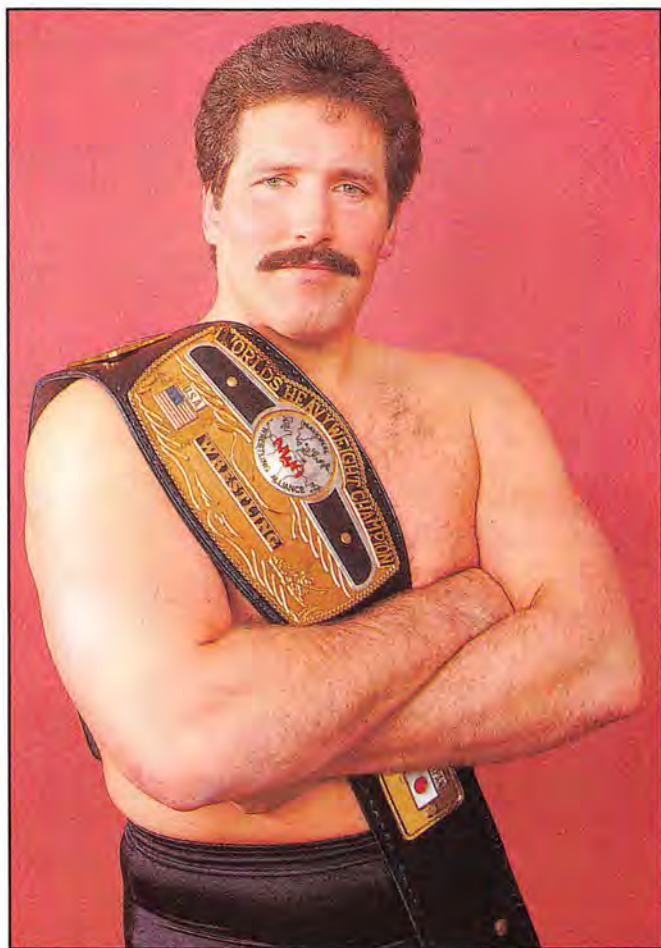
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By Liz Hunter

**S**PORTS REVIEW WRESTLING, one of our now-defunct sister publications, used to run a department called "We Accuse." I suppose that department went extinct because, today, there would be too many candidates each month. For purposes of this column, however, take a felt-tip pen and scratch out "On Assignment." Replace it with "We Accuse."

Allow me to impart the mission statement of "We Accuse," which went as follows: "From time to time, the editors of this magazine find it necessary to condemn those in wrestling who would subvert the basic principles of decency, integrity, and honesty. Without such truths, our sport will die."



Three years after his first reign ended, Dan Severn became NWA heavyweight champion again, this time under controversial circumstances in Japan. Severn insisted he didn't want to win the title on a fast count, but he didn't go so far as to refuse to take the belt, did he? A scandal is rocking the NWA!

I accuse Jim Miller of violating these principles and bringing the integrity of the entire NWA into question.

On March 9, more than 3,000 fans packed Korakuen Hall in Tokyo to watch NWA champion Shinya Hashimoto defend his title against former champ Dan Severn. Not only were the fans anxious to see these world-renowned shootfighters battle for one of wrestling's greatest prizes, but they also were assured of an intense grudge match.

After Hashimoto had defeated Gary Steele and previous champ Steve Corino for the vacant NWA title in a three-way match on December 15, Severn showed an uncharacteristic lack of sportsmanship by ruining the moment and attacking the Japanese star. As a result, the typically respectful Japanese crowd went into Korakuen Hall in heavy support of Hashimoto.

The first several minutes of the title match didn't disappoint. Severn, who usually focuses his offense on one body part, attacked the champion's left arm. Hashimoto, hoping to eliminate Severn's vertical base and deny him leverage for armbars and arm-twists, went for his challenger's right leg.

Both Hashimoto and Severn employed a variety of styles, from the martial arts to catch-as-catch-can wrestling. Severn executed a belly-to-belly suplex at the eight-minute mark, but Hashimoto kicked out.

That's when a tremendous effort, which demonstrated the NWA's best qualities, was ruined by a selfish, attention-grabbing act by President Jim Miller. He walked to ringside and conferred with chief referee Fred Richards. Their quick discussion became an argument, but not loud enough for the crowd to hear. The gist of the argument became clear a couple of minutes later.

Severn went for a pin attempt, which Richards counted very fast. Hashimoto barely escaped. Later, Hashimoto covered Severn, but Richards counted very slowly. Hashimoto confronted Richards about his newfound bias. Meanwhile, Severn blindsided Hashimoto with a bridged German suplex. Richards slapped the canvas three times at lightning speed.

Officials from Zero-One, the NWA territory in Japan, ran into the ring to protest the decision. Wrestlers emerged from the backstage area to see what was happening. The normally calm Japanese fans were angry. And, to make a questionable deed downright disgusting, Miller danced and pranced around the ring, further antagonizing the capacity crowd. Severn seemed annoyed, too.

*(Continued on page 85)*



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**T**ALENTED, VERSATILE, unorthodox, graceful. All these words describe Rob Van Dam well. His high-risk style has made him one of the sport's most popular wrestlers for years ... Native of Battle Creek, Michigan, has a background in kickboxing ... Got interested in wrestling after meeting the original Sheik in 1989 ... Made his pro debut in 1990 in Toledo, Ohio, against Dango Nguyen, another wrestler with a kickboxing background ... Started feuding with Sabu early in his career (*"Those matches were always exciting"*) ... Spent three years in various independent promotions before debuting in All-Japan in 1993 ... Over the next several years, wrestled all over the United States and made frequent return trips to Japan (*"It's such a great atmosphere over there"*) ... Made his ECW debut on January 5, 1996, in Philadelphia a victorious one by pinning Axl Rotten ... Challenged men like Sabu, 2 Cold Scorpio, Shane Douglas, and The Sandman in tag team and singles matches ... Despite their long-running feud, convinced Sabu to partner with him for a match against Doug Furnas and Dan Kroffat (Phil Lafon) ... The duo soon began to team regularly, but suffered setbacks against The Eliminators as well as The Gangstas ... At the same time, his singles career led him into a series of matches with Tazz (*"Grace and finesse vs. power"*) ... Beat Lance Storm at Barely Legal, ECW's first pay-per-view event ever, on April 13, 1997 ... Proclaimed himself "Mr. Monday Night" when he debuted for the WWF

on the May 12 *Raw* and beat Matt Hardy (*"Hard to deny the nickname after that"*) ... ECW suspended Van Dam for his actions ... Was also spotted backstage talking to members of the NWO during a *Nitro* telecast ... Returned to ECW full-time shortly thereafter ... Upset TV champion Bam Bam Bigelow for the title on April 4, 1998, in Buffalo, New York ... RVD would go on to hold the title for nearly two full years (*"Easily one of the strongest championship reigns ever"*)



Goldust went after the wrong man when he returned to the WWF a few months ago. RVD beat him cleanly and convincingly at No Way Out. Don't be surprised if Van Dam is a full-time WWF main-eventer soon.

... Along with Sabu, beat Chris Candido and Lance Storm for the ECW tag team title on June 27 in Philadelphia ... Retained the title against Jinsei Shinzaki and Hayabusa at Heatwave 1998 ... Partnered with Sabu and Tazz to beat the Triple Threat (Shane Douglas, Chris Candido, and Bam Bam Bigelow) in the main event of 1998's November to Remember ... Began fending off Jerry Lynn, who wanted RVD's TV title. Their rivalry would feature some of the best matches in the history of ECW (*"He's the kind of talent who could even push RVD to the limit"*) ... After beating Lynn on two successive

pay-per-views, Van Dam teamed with him to defeat Lance Storm and Justin Credible at Heatwave 1999 on July 18 ... Broke his ankle while performing a baseball slide in a match against Rhyno on January 29, 2000. The injury would eventually force ECW officials to strip Van Dam of the TV title (*"The only way to get that belt off RVD"*) ... After ECW folded, Van Dam wrestled in Japan before returning to the WWF as part of the WCW/ECW invasion ... At the In-

vasion pay-per-view, defeated hardcore champion Jeff Hardy to win the title (*"That's a match that people wanted to see for a while"*) ... RVD's reign as hardcore champ greatly elevated that title ... Retained the title against Chris Jericho at Unforgiven on September 23, 2001, before eventually dropping it to The Undertaker ... Targeted by Goldust's return to the WWF in January, but beat the would-be movie star cleanly at the No Way Out pay-per-view ... Continues to show WWF officials that he's ready to main-event on a full-time basis (*"RVD's time is now"*). □



**ROB VAN DAM**

**308**





By Scott Teal

## BOB ROOP

**B**OB ROOP'S WRESTLING career followed the same progression as that of Kurt Angle—from high school, into college, to the Olympics, and finally to the pros. If he didn't have a strong inner fiber, he might have given up wrestling long before he achieved his tremendous success.

Because his high school team had no other heavyweight, Roop made the varsity squad as a freshman at East Lansing High School in Michigan. His record that year was a dreadful 0-22-1. Three years later, he turned that record around completely, winning a state championship with a mark of 29-0.

A great all-around athlete, Roop went to Michigan State on a football scholarship, but joined the Army two years later and came out with a full scholarship to Southern Illinois University. Twice during his college years, Bob placed in the top four in the National AAU tournament. His crowning achievement, though, was winning a berth on the 1968 Olympic team as the Greco-Roman heavyweight. One year later, he won the National AAU Greco-Roman title at 220 pounds. It wasn't hard for him to decide to go pro.

"After college, I took a job with a starting salary of \$13,000," he said.



Bob Roop (far left) poses with Danny Hodge, Ole Anderson, and Tim Woods at a recent Gulf Coast wrestlers' reunion.

"That's when I talked to Lars Anderson, who had made 75 grand in two years as a pro wrestler. My athletic trainer knew Sam Muchnick, the St. Louis promoter, who arranged for me to meet with Eddie Graham, the promoter in Florida." In 1969, Bob moved his wife and son to Tampa, where he began training with Hiro Matsuda.

"I wanted to learn the pro moves," said Roop, "but in return, Matsuda wanted me to teach him takedowns. I could take him down easily, but he couldn't take me down and he wouldn't quit. We'd do that for 45 minutes without a break. Then he taught me the crippling holds by example. He dropped his knee on the back of my ankle, then grabbed my toe and started yanking on it."

Two other pros instrumental in training Roop were John Heath and Don Curtis. He remembers wrestling Heath in one of his first pro matches. "We did all the classical wrestling moves—takedowns, fireman's carries, go-behinds, switches. We'd do some of the flashier moves, but most of the time, we'd stay in a hold for a long time. After about 15 minutes, I heard someone in the audience yell, 'Hey, we wanna see some *real* wrestling!'"

Soon Roop gained a reputation in Florida as a man who took on all challengers. Don Kernodle—a man who went on to enjoy a pretty successful pro career—was one of those challengers.

"I was in Charlotte and wasn't working out or running like I had been, while Don was an amateur wrestler at a local college," he recalled. "It took me over 10 minutes to make him give up, which is embarrassing. Before that, I never had a guy last more than 30 seconds.



Don used that to launch his career in the wrestling business."

Over the next two decades, Bob wrestled throughout the Southeast and even Madison Square Garden. At one time, he was the matchmaker for Roy Shire's promotion in San Francisco and owned his own wrestling company in Tennessee. His last venture in wrestling was as a road agent for WCW in 1990.

Now 58, Roop has found plenty of meaningful things to do with his life after wrestling. "For the first six months I was home, I was Mr. Mom to my boys. I now spend several hours a day doing volunteer work at my boys' school. I also took advanced scout training classes and work in several areas with the Boy Scouts."

Roop has also started his own publishing company, Shoulderbreaker Publications. He recently finished his first book, *Death Match*, a suspense/detective novel set in—you guessed it—the world of pro wrestling. It should be available later this year.

(Scott Teal publishes the newsletter "Whatever Happened To ...?" He can be reached at: P.O. Box 2781, Hendersonville, TN 37077-2781. Web site: [www.1wrestlinglegends.com](http://www.1wrestlinglegends.com).) □

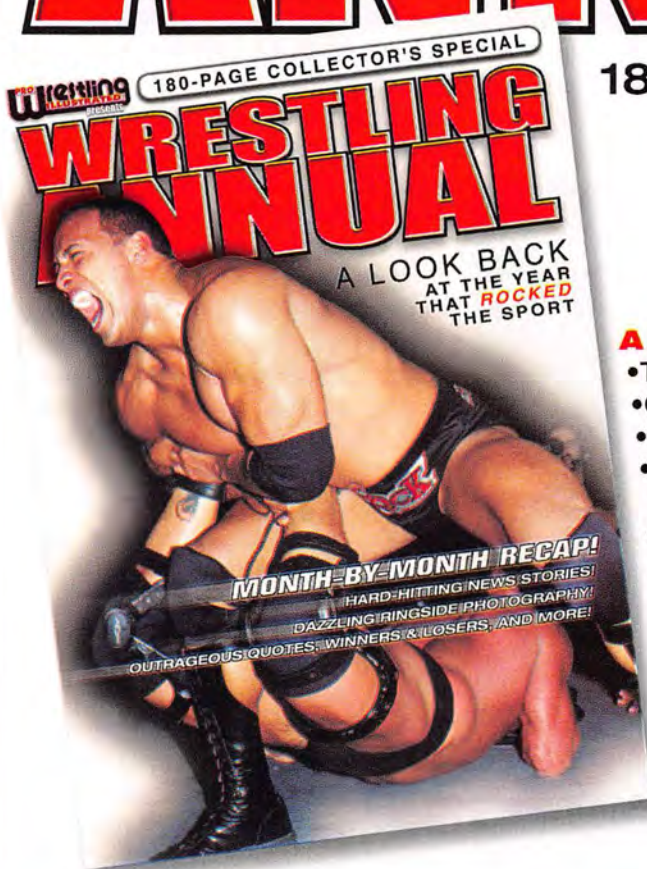


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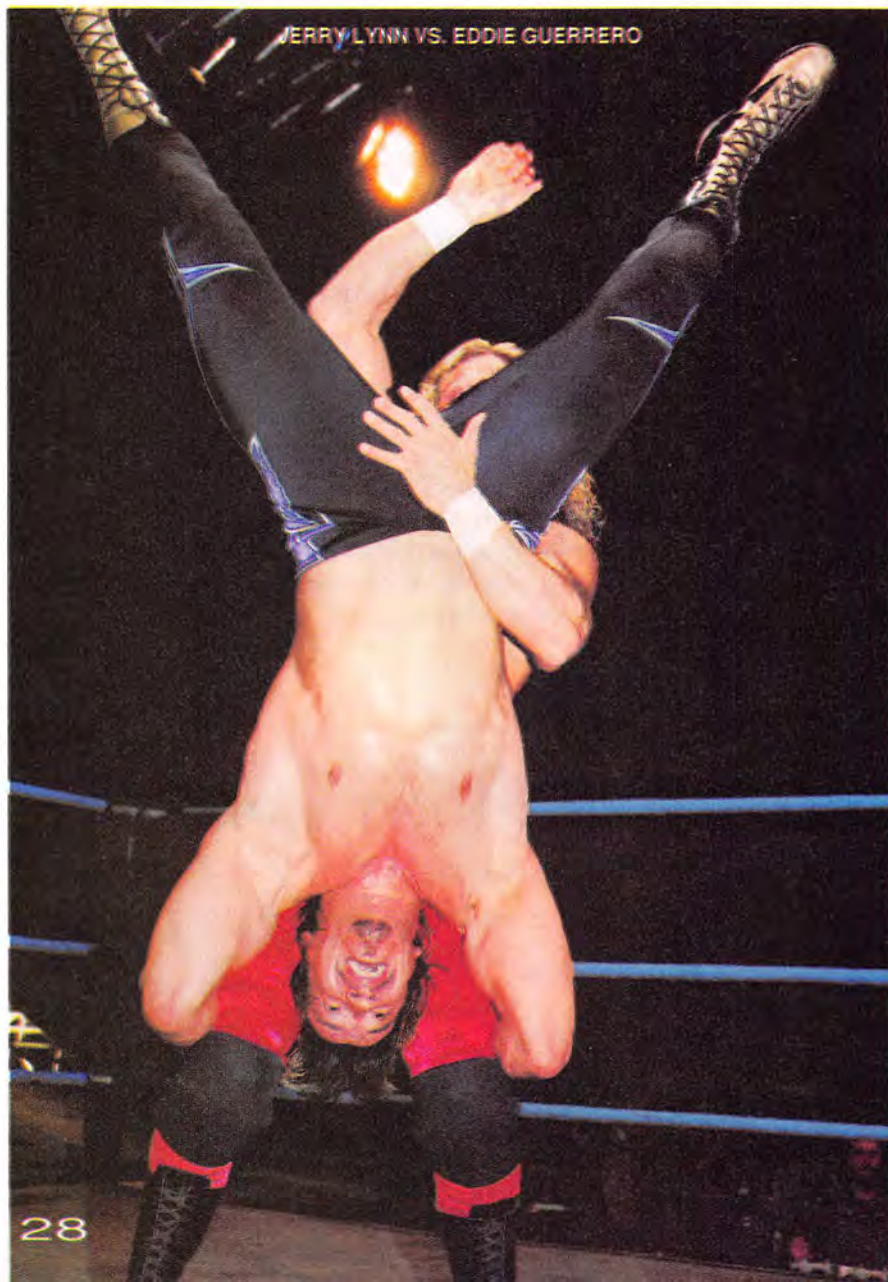
With Matt Brock

**Harder than nails, veteran wrestling reporter Matt Brock has logged more miles covering wrestling than any other journalist. Every month Matt will travel to the sport's hotbeds, reporting everything he sees without fear or favor**

**LAS VEGAS, NV:** It's a hell of a night to be a wrestling fan, but a lousy night to be a wrestling fan in Sin City. Across the Pacific in Japan, Keiji Muto defended the Triple Crown against Toshiaki Kawada. Muto's career rebirth last year was the most sensational story in Japan, and maybe in all of wrestling. A sellout crowd packed Budokan Hall to the rafters to witness a 27-minute mat classic. When all was said and done, Kawada put Muto away with a power

bomb and came away with the most prestigious championship in the Land of the Rising Sun. Me? I'm stuck at the Aladdin Hotel and Casino, watching Scott Steiner rough up a couple of midgets. I swear, Saks and Lenker are trying to put me out to pasture with assignments like this. The WWA tried its hand at pay-per-view, and I guess I'll be kind and say that showed a lot of guts. The real fact of the matter is this promotion is a good two years away from even considering PPVs in the U.S. First of all, Randy Savage and Road Dogg were both advertised for the show, and neither was there. As far as I'm concerned, that's two strikes against you before your show even starts. When your main-event talent doesn't show, what makes you think fans are going to, especially in Vegas, where there's not exactly a shortage of entertainment? Best part of the night was Jerry Lynn's unexpected debut. Lynn had a brief confrontation with Eddie Guerrero that could set up a great series of matches. Would have liked to have watched Lynn and Sabu go at it and see if they could reach the same level of intensity Lynn had with Sabu's long-time rival/tag team partner, Rob Van Dam. It certainly beats Jeff Jarrett vs. Brian Christopher (decent match, but I saw it in Memphis 10 years ago), Steiner vs. Disco Inferno, and the comedic stylings of Mark Madden.

**PHILADELPHIA, PA:** Speaking of Eddie Guerrero, turns out he's not a half-bad travel partner. The day before I headed west into the desert, I had the opportunity to catch this new Ring of Honor promotion's debut card at a place called the Murphy Rec Center. Glad I did, too. I'm seeing this sport slowly moving back to the post-WWII days of indy cards in small





barns, and I'm liking it. Put wrestling in a casino and it just doesn't fit. WrestleMania IV proved as much. Small house, revved up crowd, some cigar smoke wafting in the air, and the smell of stale beer—that's wrestling. Guerrero wrestled Super Crazy for the newly created IWA Puerto Rico Intercontinental title. Don't know how a promotion can crown an Intercontinental champion for another promotion on its very first show. Super Crazy won a wild match that was as good as anything you're likely to see on PPV in the next year. I also got to see six of the most exciting aerialists I've ever seen in Red, Brian XL, Jose and Joel Maximo, Chris Divine, and Quiet Storm. Anyway, back to Eddie Guerrero. Bumped into him again in the airport. Turns out he had the next seat on the flight out to Vegas. I asked him how he felt about wrestling for one title one night, then flying across the country to wrestle for another the next. "I can't complain," he said. "I've got plenty of matches booked all over the place, and I'm getting the chance to wrestle some great talent. I'm telling you, maintaining this kind of schedule while making time for the gym has helped me focus. I think this will make me a better competitor in the long run." Told him I hoped things would work out for him and meant it. After the WWA card, I asked him if he would join me for dinner at the MGM Grand buffet. "No three-dollar steaks and warmed over macaroni for me, Matt," Eddie replied. "I'm not going to take this body for granted anymore."



DAVID FLAIR

**LOUISVILLE, KY:** Don't know if Prototype is "the perfect man," as he often claims to be, but the gold belt around his waist at least gives some credibility to that claim. At least it would if he didn't have to rely on an ether-soaked rag to beat Leviathan. Prototype has a lot going for him, including a WWF developmental contract. Has a great physique and plenty of attitude to go with that. He also has a monkey on his back, a monkey by the name of David Flair. Flair has gotten a whole lot better in the ring since his WCW days. These days, he's a clean-cut fan favorite who has had some moderate success in OVW. Still, Prototype vs. Flair is a big-time mismatch on paper. Yet a week before Prototype upset Leviathan for the OVW title, that perfect man was on the other end of a major upset—to

Flair. That loss was the only blemish on Prototype's perfect singles record in OVW to that point. Now Flair is in his head. And if David is anything like his father, that's exactly where he wants to be. Prototype is in no hurry to sign for a rematch. "The kid got lucky; he's a one-shot wonder," Prototype told me. "One fluke win does not a number-one contender make." Maybe not. But WWF deals don't get handed out to guys who duck "one-shot wonders." You can bet WWF talent scouts are watching how this situation develops.

**COLUMBIA, SC:** Last column, I had to write about the deaths of Russ Haas and Richard Garza, a.k.a. The Mighty Igor. I didn't get into this business to write obituaries, though it's starting to feel like it. Just heard about the death of Swede Hanson. Hanson and Rip "The Profile" Hawk were one of the toughest tag teams in the business during the 1960s. A former Golden Gloves champion, Hanson was a whiskey-swilling powerhouse who would have gotten along quite well with Faarooq and Bradshaw. In the late-1970s and early-1980s, Hanson got a couple of decent runs in the WWF. I was there on October 22, 1979, when Hanson challenged Bob Backlund for the World title at Madison Square Garden. Backlund won. After the match, I visited with "Raw-boned" Swede in the locker room. Thought he'd be putting his ham-bones through lockers. Instead, I found him with a smile on his face and a beer in his hands. Win, lose, or draw, Swede Hanson just loved being in the ring. □



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**Nov. 1992: The Great American Crash: Vader Crushes Sting For The WCW World Title.** Also: Ric Flair, Ultimate Warrior, Madusa, Warlord & Barbarian-Bushwhackers, top rope rule.

**Dec. 1992: Hey, Ric Flair: Stop Whining And Start Winning.** Also: Razor Ramon, Heavenly Bodies, Jeff Jarrett, Windham & D. Rhodes, NWA title.

**Jan. 1993 (Special Edition): 80,355 Fans Can't Be Wrong: This Was The Greatest SummerSlam Ever!** Also: WWF-USWA, LOD, Sting-Simmons, Bret-Shango, Rude-Dustin.

**March 1993: Who Controls The Balance Of Power In The WWF?** Also: Shawn Michaels, Nikita Koloff, Windham-Dustin, Survivor Series, Rod Price.

**April 1993: New Blood! The Wrestlers Who Could Revitalize The WWF In '93.** Also: Z-Man & Gunn, Sting-Vader, Dangerous Alliance, Ric Flair.

**May 1993: Exclusive WrestleMania IX Match Analysis.** Also: Andre the Giant, Pillman & Austin, Great Muta, Headshrinkers-Steiners, 2 Cold Scorpio.

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**Jan. 1996: Our Holiday Wish List For 1996!** Also: Scott Norton, Sid Vicious, Pscoosis-Misterio, Barry Horowitz, Sabu.

**Feb. 1996: Wrestling's Top Stars: What 1996 Has In Store For Them!** Also: Goldust, Sherri-Parker, Mikey Whipwreck, Smokin' Gunns.

**March 1996: His Excellency! How Bret Masterminded Diesel's Execution.** Also: Jeff Jarrett, Giant, Jim Cornette, Survivor Series, Eddie Guerrero.

**June 1996: Luger Or Hogan? If Sting Makes The Wrong Choice, He's Through!** Also: Road Warriors, Roddy Piper, Ahmed Johnson, Raven, Al Snow.

**Aug. 1996: The Greening Of Wrestling: How Sting & Shawn Will Become \$50,000,000 Men!** Also: Bodydonnas, Giant, Guerrero-Misterio, George Steele, Goldust & Marlena.

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**Oct. 1997 (Special Issue): WCW Midyear Report.** Also: LOD-PG-13, Rob Van Dam, Flair & Horsemen, Ken Shamrock, McMichael-White, Madd & Mama Maxxine.

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**Jan. 1999: Seasons Greetings With A Bang (DDP & Kimberly).** Also: Severn-Shamrock, Konnan, Arn, Undertaker-Kane, Chris Jericho.

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**March 1999: Strange Situation! Insider Reveals: "Shane Still Resents His Father!"** Also: X-Pac, Hogan-Warrior, Jesse Ventura, Billy Kidman, Scott Norton.

**April 1999 (Special Issue): The 1999 Inside Wrestling Computer Tournament.** Also: Bossman-McMahon, Steiner & Bischoff, Hollywood Hogan, Wrath, Blue Meanie.

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**Jan. 2000: Dreaming Of An Extreme Christmas (Tommy Dreamer & Francine).** Also: Goldberg, Al Snow, Billy Gunn, Doring & Road Kill, cigar-chompers.

**Feb. 2000: Wrestling's Top Stars: What's Ahead For 2000!** Vince-Bulldog, Mike Awesome, Sid Vicious, Gorilla Monsoon.

**March 2000: Kevin Nash & Scott Hall: Getting Inside The Outsiders' Heads.** Also: Dudleys, Jerry Lynn, Vince-DX, Kimberly, Zero Gravity.

**April 2000 (Special Issue): The Y2K Computer Tournament.** Also: Jarrett-PTB, Christopher & Taylor, Lou E. Dangerously, Lawler-Fantastico.

**May 2000: Hey, Scott, Watch Your Back! The NWO Is Setting You Up!** Also: Hacksaw Duggan, Rikishi Platu, Taz, Mike Awesome.

**June 2000: Chris Jericho's Deadliest Enemy: His Ego!** Also: Tazz, Kidman-Torrie, Nash-Funk, Buff Bagwell, New Jack.

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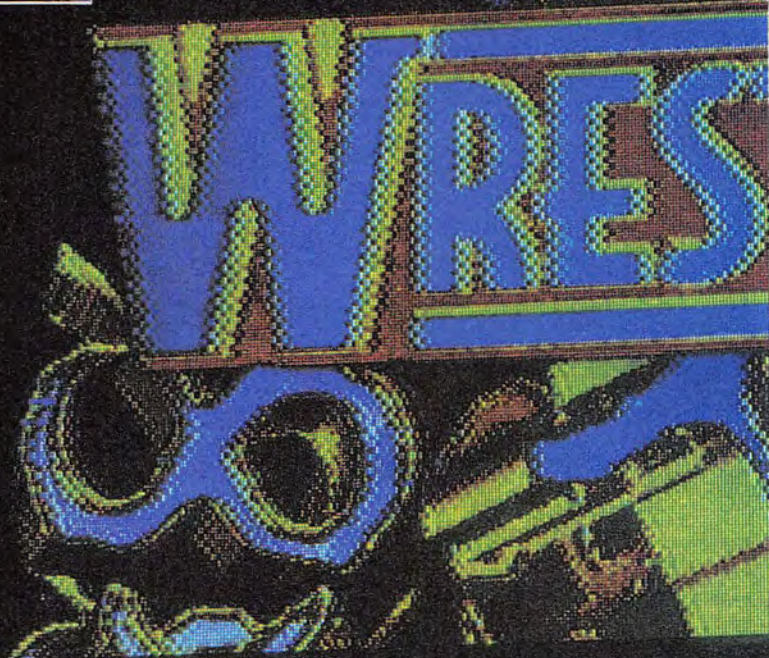
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# WRESTLEMANIA X8

## The *real* winners & losers!

By Will Welsh

**T**HE MATCHES HAVE long since ended. The fever has died down. Heck, every one of you probably ordered WrestleMania X8 on pay-per-view, attended live, or at least watched the WrestleMania fallout on *Raw* and *Smackdown* in the days that followed the biggest show of the year. You know who won the WWF World title match, the four-way elimination match for the World tag team title, and even the match that was supposed to decide who would go down in history as the "absolute best ever." You know who won and lost every match.

But do you know who *really* won and who *really* lost the 11 PPV matches (not including all of those impromptu hardcore title matches) held on March 17

at the SkyDome in Toronto, Ontario? That's the question. There's so much more to a match—especially a WrestleMania match—than simply who pinned whom and which wrestlers walked out of the arena with gold strapped around their waists.

Every major card—and certainly a WrestleMania card—provides the impetus for feuds between others. This WrestleMania card provided the impetus for a division of the WWF brand. That's why we have dug beneath the surface of this supercard of supercards to find out exactly who won and who lost at WrestleMania X8 in the important ways. It's a one-of-a-kind analysis that can only be found on the pages of *INSIDE WRESTLING*.

As always, if you want the real story, you have to look very closely to find it.



Although he had his moments against Rob Van Dam, William Regal was one of the more clear-cut losers at this year's WrestleMania. RVD never seemed to be in serious danger of losing to him. Regal had better hope he's not in the opening match of next year's 'Mania—and not in another Intercontinental title match.



**THE MATCH:** Rob Van Dam vs. William Regal for the Intercontinental title

**THE ACTION:** For the second year in a row, Regal found himself in WrestleMania's opening match. WWF officials must like the way he wrestles, because they're not going to put him out there if they think he'll disappoint and get a hot crowd off to a dull start. That must mean they have confidence in Van Dam, too.

Anyway, the match was a definite clash of styles (as was Regal's WrestleMania match with Chris Jericho last year). RVD started off fast, hitting Regal with a flurry of offense that included a stiff kick and a flip splash. Regal quickly went for his trademark brass knuckles, but Van Dam kicked them right out of his hand. After missing an early five-star frog splash, Van Dam went for rolling thunder, but Regal managed to get his knees up to block the maneuver. RVD returned the favor by blocking a Regal submission hold.

The match got ugly when Regal took Van Dam over with a half-nelson German suplex, dropping the former ECW TV champ right onto the top of his head. Van Dam went to the outside to recover, but Regal went out after him and rolled him back into the ring. After Regal tried to work two more sets of knuckles into the match, Van Dam tagged Regal with a spinning heel kick and another ridiculously high five-star frog splash. This one hit the spot.

**THE WINNER:** Van Dam pinned Regal at 6:18 to win the Intercontinental title.

**THE REAL WINNER:** The Intercontinental title, which had gotten devalued and almost lost amongst the WCW invasion and NWO invasion hoopla during the past year. In RVD, the Intercontinental title has found a proud and worthy owner.

**THE REAL LOSER:** Regal. One year ago, Regal lost to Jericho in a match for the Intercontinental title, so that's two WrestleManias in a row in which Regal

has let the I-C strap slip through his fingers. But at least Regal has two things to look forward to next WrestleMania: He probably won't be in the opening match, and maybe he'll actually win. One thing is for sure: He's no Undertaker come WrestleMania time.

#### **ANOTHER LOSER:**

Edge, who had an intense, months-long feud with Regal over the Intercontinental title. He has to be bitter that RVD strolled into WrestleMania and nabbed the I-C strap

without breaking much of a sweat. We know we would be if we were him.

**THE MATCH:** "Diamond" Dallas Page vs. Christian for the European title

**THE ACTION:** This match took home honors as the surprise match of the night, as it was one of the most entertaining and well-wrestled matches of the pay-per-view. Page jump-started the bout early by rushing Christian and scoring with a gut-wrench gut-buster. Christian bounced Page's head off the top turnbuckle, then sent him off the ring apron to the outside guardrail. Christian brought Page back into the ring and started knocking him around with stiff kicks and punches. An abdominal stretch and reverse neckbreaker combo earned Christian a two-count, but Page recovered to powerslam Christian off the top turnbuckle.

Both men answered the call of 10, but Page quickly laid out Christian with a discus lariat and a sit-out power bomb. Christian responded by blocking three Diamond cutter attempts and nailing Page with another variation of the reverse neckbreaker. Another pinfall attempt saw Christian score another close two-count.

Once Page got back up, though, he cleverly maneuvered Christian into position for the Diamond cutter and took him out with it.

**THE WINNER:** Page, when he pinned Christian at 6:09 to retain the European title.

**THE REAL WINNER:** Page, who proved that he still has a lot to offer the WWF at this advanced stage of his career. One of the oldest guys on the WWF roster, Page can still keep up with the young bucks and sometimes deliver downright special matches.

**THE REAL LOSER:** Also DDP. After the match was over, Page coerced Christian into having another bounce-around-the-ring tempter tantrum. That's



something Tony Robbins would never do, no matter how much he disliked one of his disciples.

**ANOTHER WINNER:** The citizens of Europe, who escaped having Christian represent them as their champion again. We're sure that Europeans everywhere would rather have a way-too-happy "Diamond" Dallas Page as their champion than a crybaby like Christian. Unless, of course, they'd rather have a crybaby as their champion than someone from the Jersey shore.

**YET MORE WINNERS:** The citizens of Toronto, who no longer have to worry about an immature little brat like Christian calling Toronto his hometown. In the prematch introductions, Christian had Howard Finkel announce his hometown as Tampa, Florida. (Can you guess one of the upcoming losers?)

**MORE LOSERS:** Edge and Ma and Pa Christian. How would you like having Christian as a blood relative? Talk about a guy who is giving a bad reputation to the family name! (What is the family name, anyway?)

**YET MORE LOSERS:** The citizens of Tampa, Florida (see above).

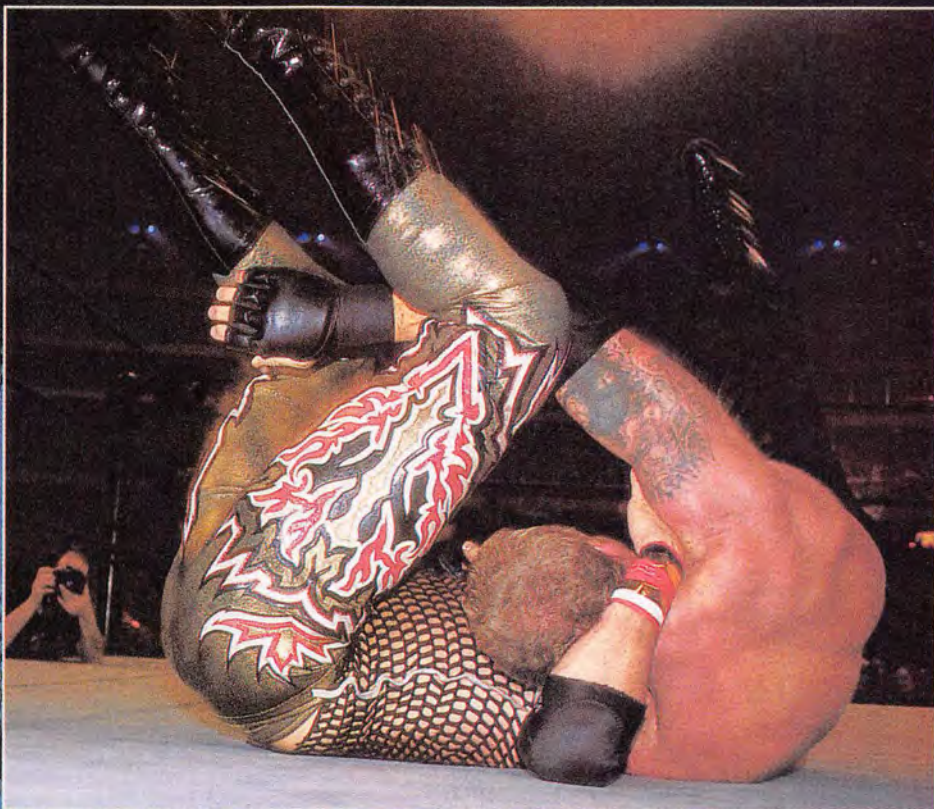
**THE MATCH:** Maven vs. Goldust for the hardcore title

**THE ACTION:** Even though Maven was the defending champion entering this match, he was the decided underdog. Not only did he have to deal with the pressures of wrestling a wily veteran like Goldust, he also had to fight off the jitters that went along with appearing in his first-ever WrestleMania. Imagine what thoughts were going through his head as he walked down the aisle.

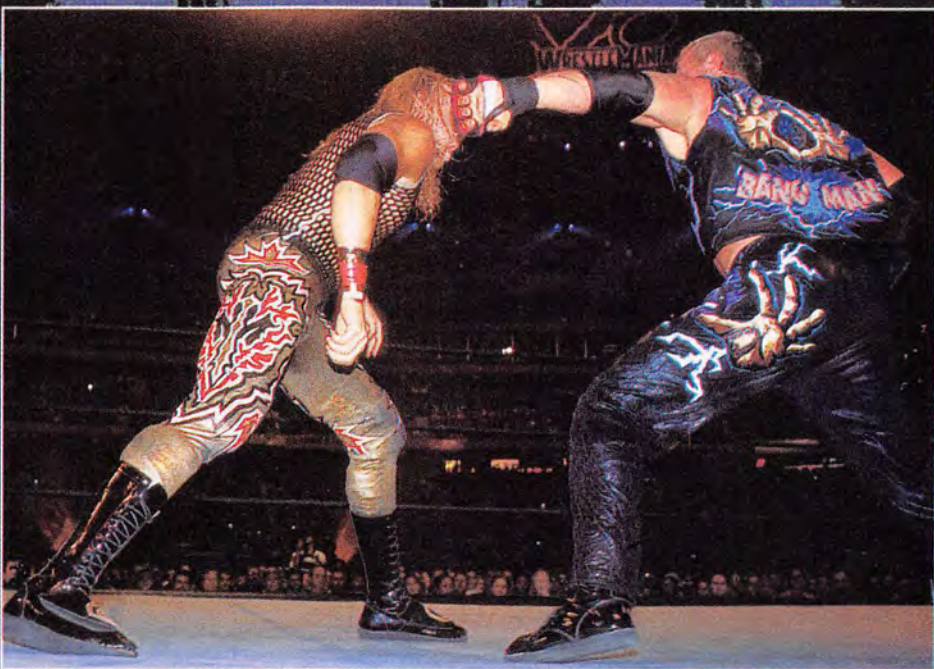
Anyway, the guy did pretty well.

Goldust tried to make quick work of Maven, knocking him off the ring apron before Maven even had a chance to get into the ring. Goldust followed up that attack with a vicious outside assault that saw Maven meet the security wall a couple of times. After tossing Maven

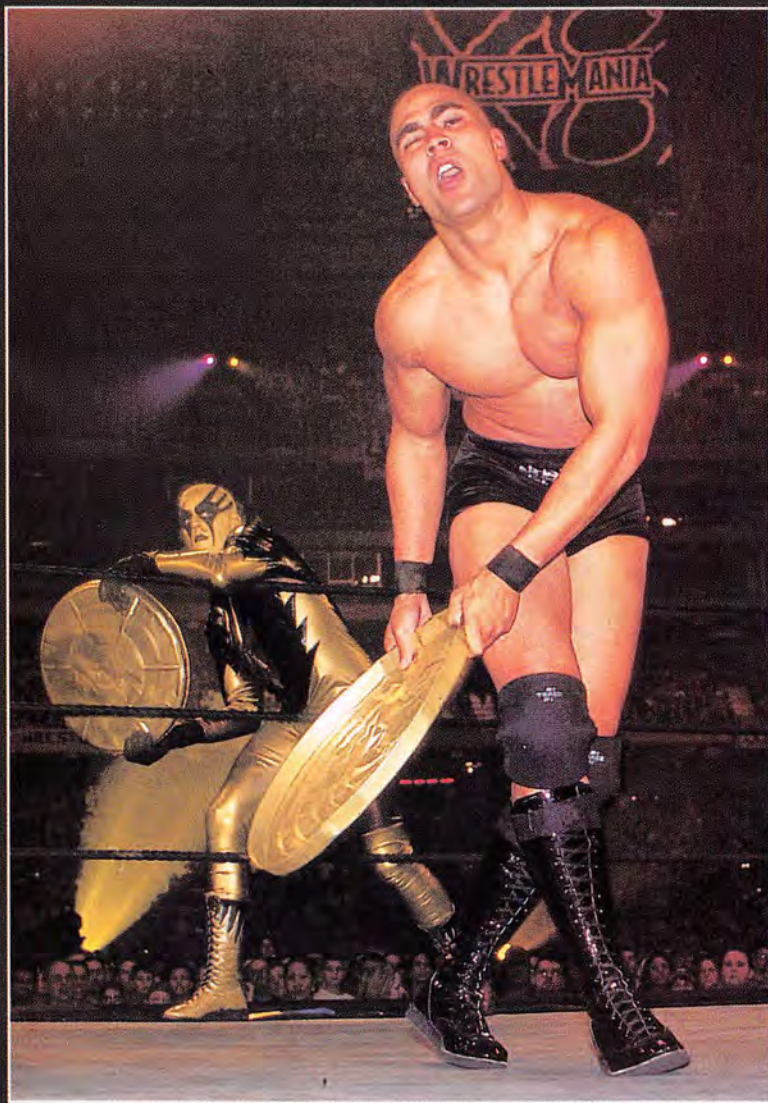
back into the ring, Goldust proceeded to beat on Maven with various ringside plunder, including a trash can, a trash can lid, and a golden shovel. But when Goldust hopped off the ring apron to find yet another weapon, Maven recovered enough to grab a trash can lid. When Goldust hopped back up, they simultaneously hit each other with trash can lids, knocking each



DDP vs. Christian received very little hype prior to WrestleMania and turned out a lot more exciting than most anticipated it would be. Page controlled his former protege on the mat much of the time (above) and outpunched him as well (below). A lot of people became winners when Christian ended up losing.







Young, inexperienced Maven took advantage of the golden weapons Goldust brought to the ring for their hardcore title match. It was a very strange first WrestleMania for him. He battled Goldust to what was, in effect, a no-contest, lost the hardcore title to Spike Dudley, then eventually won it back from Christian. Confusing, but it worked out for him in the end.

other out. That's when lil' Spike Dudley ran into the ring and pinned Maven.

**THE WINNER:** Spike Dudley, who invoked the 24/7 hardcore title rule to pin Maven at 3:17.

**THE REAL WINNER:** Maven, who proved that he could hang with Goldust, one of the game's most dangerous veterans. If Spike Dudley didn't run down to ringside and smartly take advantage of the 24/7 rule, it's not out of the question that Maven could have mounted a comeback. With youth and athleticism on his side, Maven could have pulled off the upset.

**THE REAL LOSER:** Goldust. Why was he wrestling for the hardcore title? We thought he had bigger aspirations than that. Of course, there are only so many titles in the WWF, and with the glut of superstar talent that was under hire by the time WrestleMania rolled around, maybe it's no surprise that Goldust was so low on the card. Hulk Hogan, Triple-H, or The Rock Goldust is not.

**ANOTHER LOSER:** Mr. Perfect, who, like Goldust, returned to the WWF at the Royal Rumble, yet wasn't officially on the pay-per-view and had to settle for a match on *Heat*. He realized after watching this match that Goldust is higher in the pecking order.

**YET MORE LOSERS:** Crash Holly and Al Snow, both of whom couldn't catch Spike Dudley in time to take advantage of the 24/7 rule themselves.

**ANOTHER WINNER:** Hurricane Helms, who captured the hardcore title from Spike Dudley after swooping down from somewhere in the backstage area.

**AND YET ANOTHER LOSER:** The Godfather, who somehow got tangled up in the series of hardcore title skits yet didn't manage to win the title. Of course, he was too busy running Hurricane out of his scantily clad escorts' dressing room, so maybe we should give him a pass.

**YET ANOTHER WINNER:** Mighty Molly, who turned against Hurricane and hit him over the head with a frying pan to capture the hardcore title.

**AND YET ANOTHER WINNER:** Christian, who rebounded from his loss to DDP by sneak-attacking Molly, slamming a door in her face, and capturing the hardcore title away from her.

**AND, YES, YET ANOTHER GOSH-DARN WINNER:** Maven, who originally lost the title to Spike early in the night but recaptured it by pinning Christian just before Christian could escape from the SkyDome in a cab. For a rookie, he sure is tenacious! And he was even smart enough to steal Christian's cab and flee!

**THE MATCH:** Kurt Angle vs. Kane

**THE ACTION:** Considering that these two have had surprisingly excellent matches before, we were expecting them to turn it up a notch for WrestleMania. They tried, but it was one of the few matches on the pay-per-view that came off a wee bit forced.

Angle entered the match confident. He is the only man in WWF history to make Kane submit. Of course, that made Kane more determined than ever. Both wrestlers, for one reason or another, had a lot to prove.

Angle tried to get the upper hand early, first by ripping Canada's Olympic gold medal-winning figure skating team of David Pelletier and Jamie Sale, then by attacking Kane with a series of stiff right hands to the head. And once Kane retaliated, Angle quickly took "The Big Red Machine" over with a German suplex. Angle kept the pressure on, but Kane responded with a number of punches of his own. After a few minutes of back-and-forth action, Angle some-



how got Kane over with a stunning belly-to-belly suplex.

Angle slowed the pace of the match with a front facelock, but Kane powered out of that hold. After being on the receiving end of a few Angle punches, Kane grabbed the Olympian and put him down with a sidewalk slam a little more than four minutes into the match. Angle caught his wind fast, though, and further weakened Kane with a rolling triple German suplex. Two top-rope maneuvers cost Angle the momentum, though, as Kane linked together a series of Irish whip maneuvers, including a back bodydrop.

Kane tried to finish Angle off with a choke-slam, but Angle managed to get his hand into the ropes, stopping the pin count. Angle then went for Kane's mask to distract the big man, and it worked. But his Angle slam only earned him a two-count. This prompted Angle to "go Olympic" on Kane, as he applied the anklelock submission hold. Somehow, Kane broke the hold with an enzuigiri. Kane then went to the top turnbuckle, but Angle ran to the corner and superplexed Kane off. The pin came shortly thereafter.

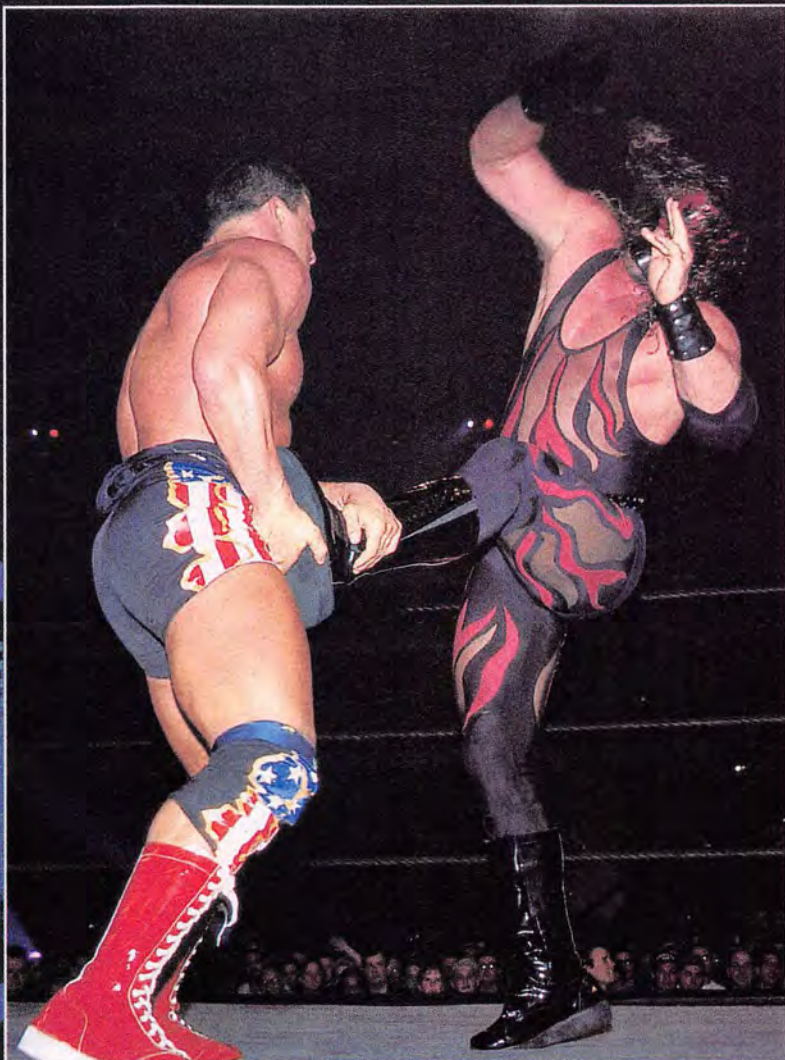
**THE WINNER:** Angle, when he pinned Kane with his feet on the ropes at 10:45.

**THE REAL WINNER:** Angle, who successfully competes against all WWF competitors, regardless of size. Angle is so skilled in the ring it's a wonder anyone can beat him.

**THE REAL LOSER:** Also Angle, just because he doesn't realize how good he actually is. If Angle believed in his talents, he wouldn't have to cheat to get victories. He's so strong in the ring that he'd win most of his matches rather handily if he would just focus on the task at hand. Angle is so caught up with making the fans hate him, though, that it seems that he sometimes forgets that he's there to win matches and not just to irritate people. We'd like to see him concentrate a bit more.

**ANOTHER LOSER:** Kane. Why does he persist in wearing that mask? Angle came the closest to removing the mask in many, many years, but as soon as Kane felt it slipping off his head, he lost his temper and readjusted the mask, losing any momentum he had in the process. If Kane would just do away with the mask, his life would become so much easier.

**AND ANOTHER LOSER:** Chris Benoit, who is due to return to WWF TV any day now. It's going to be interesting to watch how he deals with Angle and his, shall we say, "borrowing" of his trademark maneuver,



Kurt Angle should have known better than to leave himself vulnerable to a Kane enzuigiri (above). He withstood the impact of the move, however, and did a nice job of neutralizing "The Big Red Machine's" height and weight advantages (below). In spite of the fact that he won the match by pinfall, Angle could be considered one of the real losers of the match.

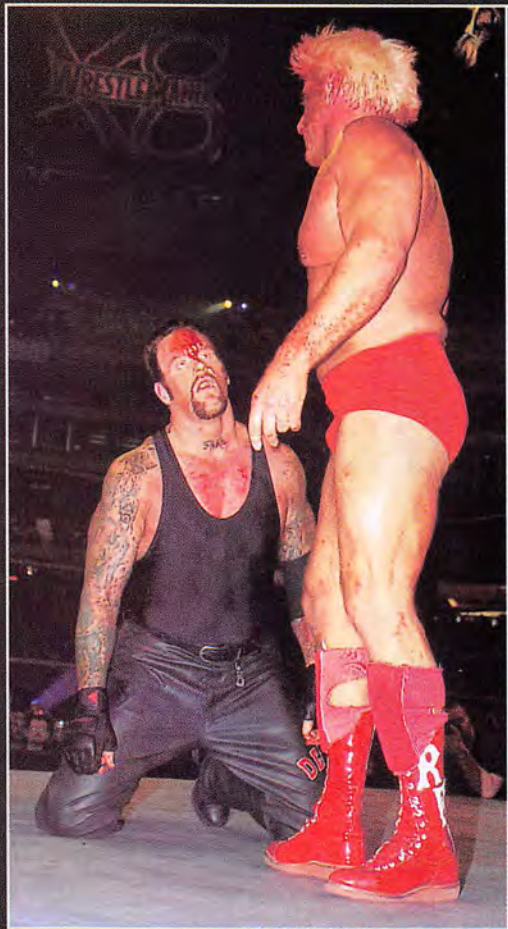


the rolling triple German suplex. It wouldn't shock us to see Benoit immediately target Angle again upon his return.

**THE MATCH:** The Undertaker vs. Ric Flair in a no-disqualification match

**THE ACTION:** The Rock vs. "Hollywood" Hulk Hogan wasn't the only battle of icons at WrestleMania X8. The match between Undertaker and Flair also





The dirtiest player in the game didn't look 53 years old when he had The Undertaker down and out at 'Mania (left). Ric Flair didn't give quite as much as he got (above), but it took just about every ounce of strength of resolve in 'Taker's body for him to put the "Nature Boy" away. Flair was a winner even in defeat.

qualified as a match for the ages.

Because of The Undertaker's actions in the weeks leading up to WrestleMania, it was also the second most heated grudge match of the evening. There would be no feeling-out process here. This match got underway immediately. Flair started stripping off his robe while walking down the aisle, and once he got into the ring, he started trading blows with 'Taker. Despite his advanced age, Flair actually gained the upper hand. He was even content to trade blows with 'Taker out by the announcers' tables. And he was so crazed that he actually launched himself off the ring apron toward 'Taker.

All things considered, Flair is probably lucky that 'Taker caught him in mid-air and threw him into the ringpost. Who knows how that landing would have gone on its own.

That maneuver, however, did change the momentum, and 'Taker beat on Flair for the next couple of minutes. Flair even took the ride over the turnbuckles and was kicked off the ring apron by 'Taker's size-16 boot. Once on the outside, UT didn't waste any time before opening a big gash on Flair's forehead.

And we all know that Flair bleeds like no other. Within minutes, Flair's platinum blond hair had turned crimson and his face was staining the mat red.

Less than seven minutes in, Flair's resolve returned. After being pummeled by The Undertaker for

more than two minutes straight, Flair went on the offensive with a series of hard-striking chops that sent 'Taker reeling. The "Nature Boy's" offensive flurry didn't last long, though. 'Taker stormed back and had Flair back on the mat within a minute. With eight minutes gone, 'Taker tried to finish Flair off with a superplex, but apparently changed his mind halfway through the pin count, as he picked Flair's head up off the mat just before the three-count in order to continue the beating.

There is no better way to describe it than to say that it was an old-school ass-kickin'. No matter what Flair did, 'Taker had an answer for it. Flair couldn't even sustain an offense with a lead pipe in his hands. He couldn't even keep the figure-four on long, because 'Taker's long reach allowed him to choke-slam his way out of the hold.

But Flair, ever the champion, got his shoulder up.

Upset, 'Taker attacked referee Charles Robinson about 16 minutes in. All that did was bring in Arn Anderson, who delivered a scintillating spinebuster on "The Dead Man."

Unbelievably, 'Taker kicked out of Flair's followup pinfall attempt.

Sadly, Flair couldn't kick out of the tombstone.

**THE WINNER:** The Undertaker, when he pinned Flair at 18:46.

**THE REAL WINNER:** Flair. The guy is amazing.



Despite his age (53), he can still be one of the best wrestlers in the world on some magical nights. He took nearly a year off from wrestling, entered the WWF as a co-owner, and his first match against a full-time wrestler is against The Undertaker. He got pummeled from pillar to post for 18 minutes, yet it took every last bit of energy that 'Taker had for him to put the "Nature Boy" away.

**THE REAL LOSER:** Nobody. Despite the beating that he took, Flair enjoyed that match. So did 'Taker. So did the fans, which means that the office did, too. And that means that everyone was happy.

**THE MATCH:** Edge vs. Booker T

**THE ACTION:** The battle over the Japanese shampoo commercial deal started off slow, with Edge and Booker tussling around the ring ropes. Edge got the early advantage with a dropkick/facebuster combination, but he couldn't keep it going, and Booker scored with a missile dropkick off the top rope and a whiplash suplex.

Edge caught Booker ascending the ropes, but couldn't capitalize completely, as his huracanrana wasn't his best. Edge kept his head about him, however, and narrowly avoided Booker's scissors kick. Booker returned the favor and stepped out of the way of a spear attempt about five minutes in. He then scored with another scissors kick, but Edge kicked out of the pin attempt. A minute and a half later, Edge nailed his Edge-a-cution finisher out of nowhere.

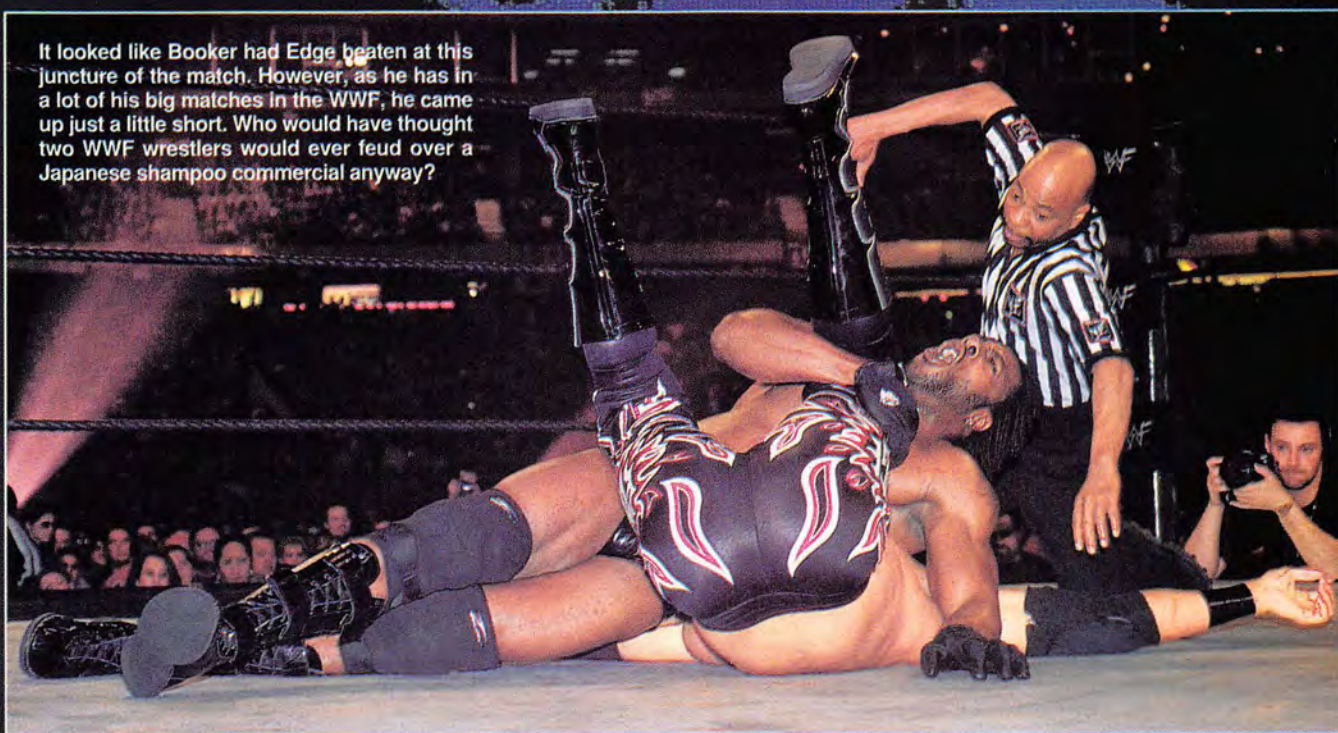
**THE WINNER:** Edge, when he pinned Booker T at 6:32.



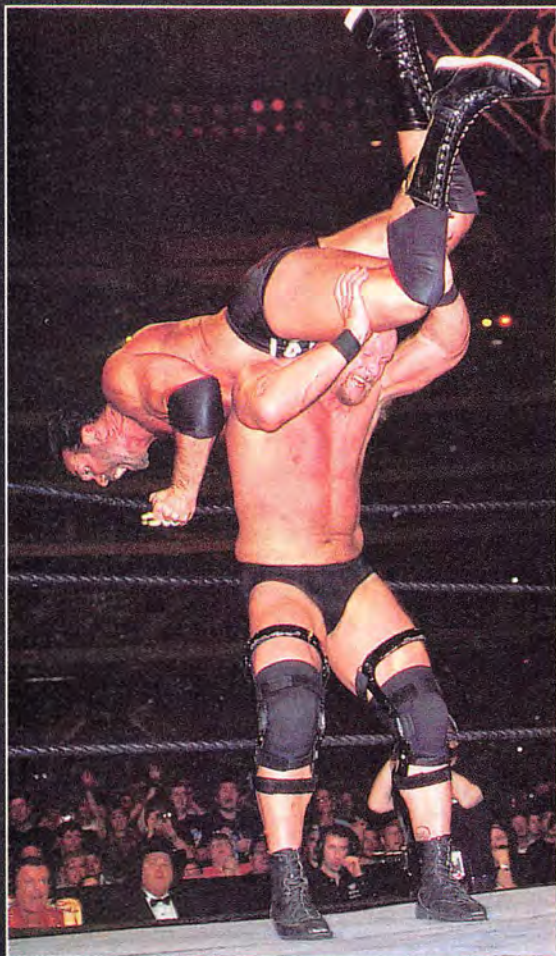
Edge wasn't necessarily wise to invite Booker to engage him in a test of strength, but everything turned out well for him at the end of this match. He beat Booker, but somehow he was a loser in the earlier RVD vs. William Regal showdown.

**THE REAL WINNER:** The Japanese shampoo company that got Edge instead of Booker T. We like Booker's dreadlocks, but how many people wear that hairstyle in Japan?

It looked like Booker had Edge beaten at this juncture of the match. However, as he has in a lot of his big matches in the WWF, he came up just a little short. Who would have thought two WWF wrestlers would ever feud over a Japanese shampoo commercial anyway?







Steve Austin vs. Scott Hall was all about "Stone-Cold" getting revenge, and he wasted very little time getting it. He backdropped Hall outside the ring in the early going (left) and finished him off, predictably, with a stunner (above). All in all, Hall probably gained more than Austin did from his match, even though he was pinned.

**THE REAL LOSER:** Edge. Like we noted earlier, if he was going to get a win over anybody at WrestleMania, it should have been over William Regal for the Intercontinental championship. A win over Booker T is poor consolation given that Rob Van Dam walked away from WrestleMania as the I-C champ.

**ANOTHER LOSER:** The WWF's creative team. A feud between two future main-eventers over a shampoo endorsement deal?

**THE MATCH:** Steve Austin vs. Scott Hall

**THE ACTION:** Before the match began, we were wondering how Austin felt about not being included in the match to decide the "absolute best ever." Then when we saw the placement of this match—smack dab in the *middle* of WrestleMania—we got even more curious about Austin's mindset.

Austin definitely had something bugging him, because he started taking out his aggression on Hall early. The first minute of their match was quite possibly the best minute of action at the pay-per-view.

Hall had Kevin Nash with him, but that didn't stop Austin from trying to stomp and chop Hall into oblivion. A quick shot to the eyes got Hall out of that predicament, but Austin caught Hall with a Thesz press and an elbow off of the ropes. Austin wanted the match over yesterday.

Hall rolled to the outside to catch his breath, but Austin wouldn't allow it. Austin got the first shot in on Nash while slamming Hall's head into the steel ring-post. Once they got back into the ring, Hall took over the offense, kicking and chopping Austin's chest red and throwing Austin into an exposed turnbuckle. Hall then kicked Austin to the outside, where Nash took a couple of free shots at "Stone-Cold."

At about the four-minute mark, Hall nailed Austin with the fallaway slam as Nash watched from the outside. A clothesline and a cover, however, only earned Hall a two-count. The assault continued, with blows from Nash coming at opportune times until Austin bought himself some time with a spinebuster.

A Stone-Cold stunner at 6:14 might have earned Austin the match, but Nash interfered, pulling the referee out of the ring and clocking Austin in the head with a series of huge, devastating, Mike Tyson-like punches. Hall went for a steel chair, but when he went to swing it at Austin, Austin kicked Hall and delivered two stunners, one for Hall and one for Nash. Austin went for the pin at that point, but there was no referee to call it. Referee Jack Doan ran out from the back to count the pin, but Nash broke it up just in time.

Austin responded well. He clotheslined Nash over the top rope and sent Hall to the outside with a back bodydrop. After some referees cleared Nash from the



ringside area, Hall surprised Austin with a Stone-Cold stunner of his own. Austin wasn't about to be beat by his own maneuver. He responded with two stunners of his own, hitting the second one before Hall could even fall to the mat from the effects of the first one.

**THE WINNER:** Austin, when he pinned Hall at 9:52.

**THE REAL WINNER:** Hall. When the NWO debuted in the WWF, there were many observers who thought that Hall, not Nash or Hogan, had the most to offer the WWF. At this stage in his career, he's a much better wrestler than Hogan and Nash, and he's certainly more charismatic than "Big Sexy." As long as he could stay clean, there were many WWF officials who thought that Hall had the best chance to contribute to the company's future. This match proved that those officials were absolutely correct. Even though he lost, he looked good. In other words, Austin didn't carry Hall to a great match. The oft-criticized Hall deserves as much credit as anyone for that match's success.

**THE REAL LOSER:** Austin, who found himself out of the main event and in a relatively unimportant grudge match that was placed halfway through the pay-per-view. We're just taking a guess here, but we imagine that his usage at WrestleMania didn't sit very well with him.

**THE MATCH:** The Dudley Boyz vs. The Hardy Boyz vs. The APA vs. Chuck Palumbo and Billy Gunn for the WWF World tag team title

**THE ACTION:** Going into this match, we knew that it wasn't going to be as special as a tables, ladders, and chairs match, but we did think that it would be pretty good.

It was.

Oddly enough, however, for the first couple of minutes, it seemed like it was a normal two-team tag match because the only teams to compete were The APA and Chuck and Billy. Even when the Dudleys were tagged in, it seemed like all the action centered on those first two teams. The Dudleys, however, saw an opening and delivered a 3D to Bradshaw. The subsequent pinfall made The APA the first team to bow out of the match at 3:26.

As soon as The APA were eliminated, the Hardys came in and quickened the pace. A double-back bodydrop and a double-elbow had D-Von seeing stars, but the moves weren't enough to gain a pinfall. And pretty soon, the match became hard to follow. The Hardys took a run at the Dudleys, who were setting up a table on the outside of the ring, leaving their legal opponents, Chuck and Billy, in the ring.

Decisions like that make little sense when there's a title on the line.

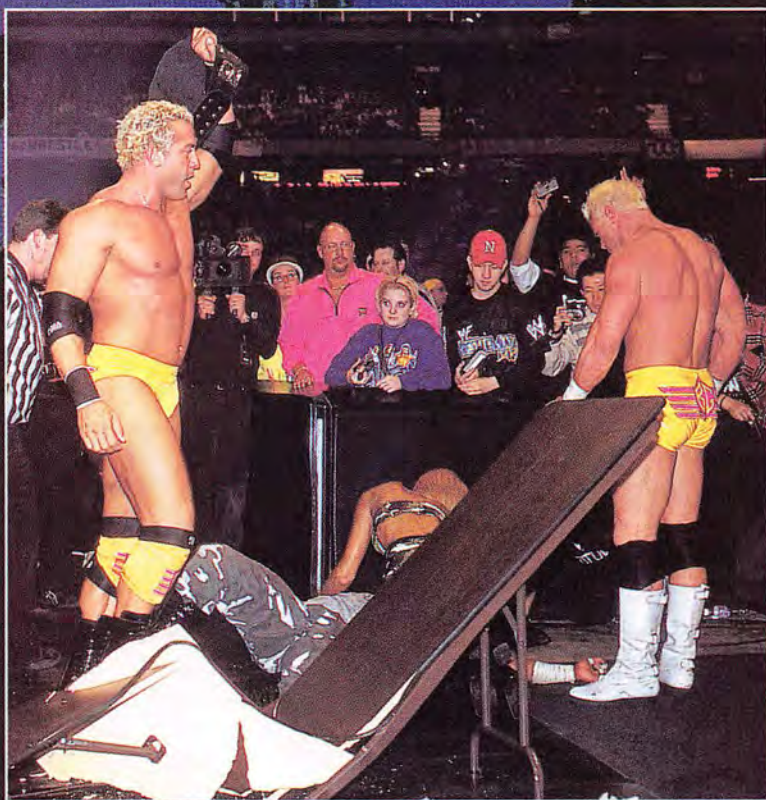
When Jeff Hardy did get back into the ring against Buh Buh Ray Dudley, Stacy Keibler

got up on the ring apron and tried to distract the North Carolina native with a flash of her buns. The idea of that must have amused Jeff, because he went over to Stacy and gave her a hard slap on the butt and a kiss on the lips.

Maybe he likes her.

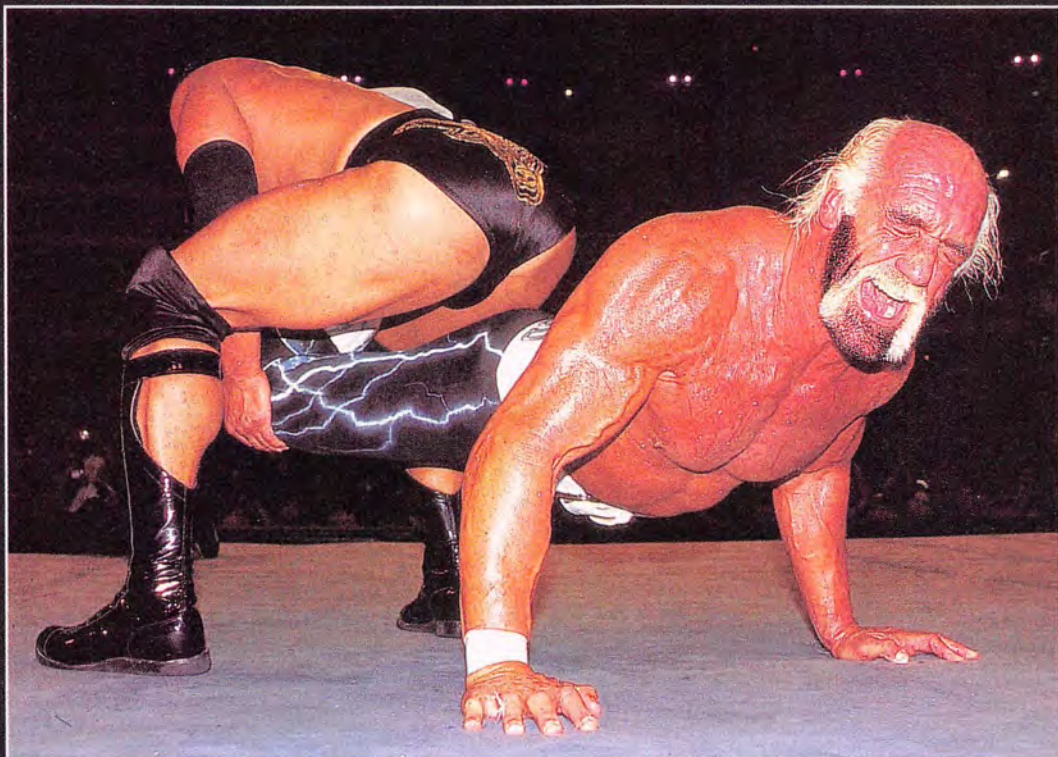
The match continued as Buh Buh Ray faced off against Jeff, with Buh Buh thoroughly dominating with strong physicality (one of Jim Ross' favorite words). And when he was tagged in, D-Von continued working over Jeff. Finally, Matt interjected himself into the match, knocking Buh Buh over the top rope and to the outside, but it didn't give Jeff Hardy enough time to make the tag. It wasn't until Jeff scored with a variation of the twist of fate that he finally tagged Matt and got the heck out of there.

The funny thing is, while all of this was going on, the defending champions, Billy and Chuck, were resting up quite comfortably on the outside. When the Hardys eliminated the Dudleys at 11:48, Billy and Chuck were as fresh as fresh could be. At this point in the match, referee Nick Patrick was letting all kinds of bad tags slide, as Chuck and Billy and Matt and Jeff became random interchangeable objects. A pair of poetry in motions and a twist of fate/swanton bomb combination on Chuck gave the Hardys a decisive advantage, but they couldn't capitalize. Billy sneaked into the ring and dropped Jeff with the famouser. Jeff somehow managed kicked out of that finisher, but as soon as he did, he was struck over the head with one

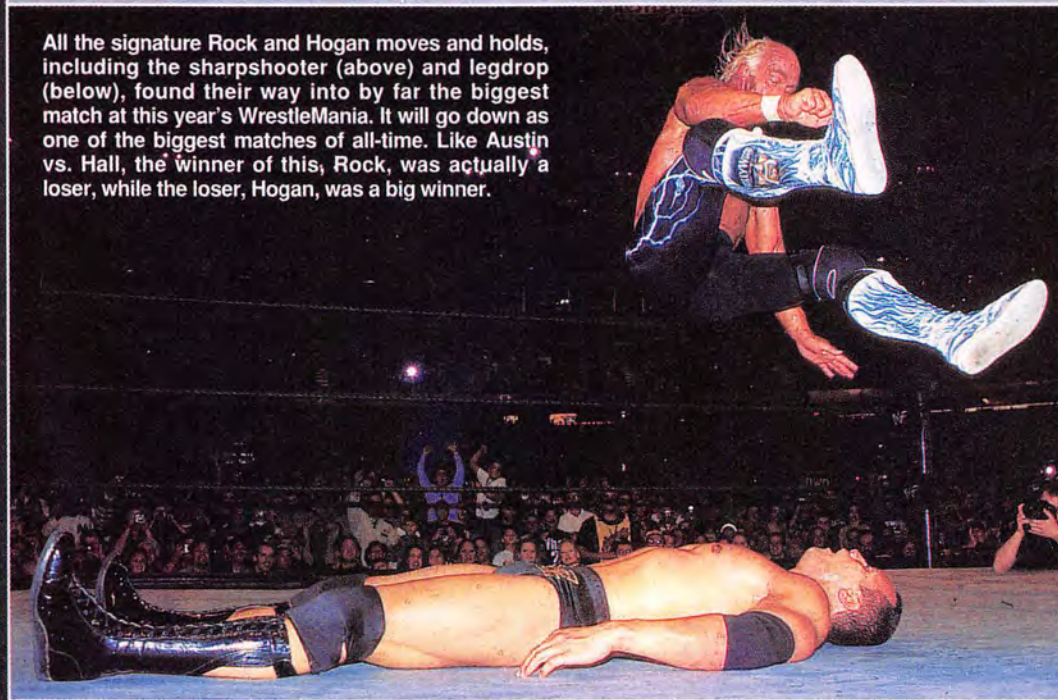


Chuck and Billy were fortunate to escape the four-way tag team match with the WWF belts, yet they do deserve credit for conserving their energy and staying out of the ring at times. They were clear-cut winners in this one.





All the signature Rock and Hogan moves and holds, including the sharpshooter (above) and legdrop (below), found their way into by far the biggest match at this year's WrestleMania. It will go down as one of the biggest matches of all-time. Like Austin vs. Hall, the winner of this, Rock, was actually a loser, while the loser, Hogan, was a big winner.



of the tag team title belts.

**THE WINNERS:** Billy and Chuck, when Chuck pinned Jeff Hardy at 13:51.

**THE REAL WINNER:** Josey Scott, lead singer for Saliva, who got to grind with Stacy Keibler while performing the intro music for The Dudley Boyz. Who knows how much money a fan would have paid for that short little dance if Stacy had put it up for bid on an auction Web site like eBay. We know that we're scrounging through our pockets looking for extra change in hopes that Stacy will take to the idea after reading this story.

**THE REAL LOSERS:** The no-name band that performs Chuck and Billy's theme music, who weren't anywhere near WrestleMania. By the way, how come that song wasn't included on the *Forceable Entry* CD?

**MORE LOSERS:** Bradshaw and Faarooq, who won the right to wrestle for the tag title at WrestleMania by winning a tag team turmoil bout at No Way Out, but opted to take that match on *Smackdown* a few weeks early. They were not a factor in this match.

**THE MATCH:** Hulk Hogan vs. The Rock

**THE ACTION:** It had been nine years since Hogan had appeared at WrestleMania. His last WrestleMania match came at WrestleMania IX, when he beat Yokozuna in an impromptu match for the WWF World heavyweight title.

Though he wasn't going for any gold at WrestleMania X8, the match was quite possibly the most important of his career. If Hogan beat The

Rock, he said, he'd go down in history as the "absolute best ever." But if Rock beat Hogan, he'd be able make that claim.

The sport's history was on the line.

Hogan surprised us—and especially surprised The Rock—by overpowering the former WWF champion in the match's opening minutes. Then the fans surprised Hogan by roaring their near unanimous approval. Hogan responded by posing down as if he was wearing his yellow and red colors.

If the Rock will excuse us, it was one of the most electrifying moments in the sport's history.



Rock didn't take too kindly to Hogan's offense, however, and eventually retaliated. When he did, the fans in attendance booed him—loudly. They booed him when he laid the smack down on Hogan. They booed him when he chased Hogan to the outside and continued the assault. They booed him when he dropped Hogan to the mat with a clothesline.

Basically, they booed the hell out of the guy the entire match—and as soon as Hogan went back on the offensive, those boos turned back into cheers.

Hogan's offense was a bit slow and methodical, but it was well-thought out. His game plan was strong. He broke the rules when he needed to, but he didn't do it so much that he risked disqualification. The tactic worked, as Hogan owned The Rock for most of the beginning part of the match. Rock noticed what was going on, though, and it didn't take him long to realize that he needed to cheat, too. Eleven minutes in, Rock put Hogan in the sharp-shooter with the referee unconscious. Hogan made his way to the ropes, but Rock dragged him back out into the middle of the ring before the ref could recover and force him to break the hold.

An angry Rock eventually broke the hold in order to wake the referee, but this allowed Hogan time to recover and to plant Rock with Rock's own finishing maneuver, the Rock bottom. The referee woke up just in time to see Hogan covering Rock, but Rock kicked out at two.

That's when Hogan went to the weight belt. He stripped it off and began welting Rock's back with one stinging whip after another. Rock responded, however, by dropping Hogan with a DDT and grabbing the weight belt himself. Then he gave Hogan a lashing of his own.

It didn't take, and neither did a Rock bottom. When Hogan kicked out, something in him sparked. The Superman comeback began and the big boot and his legendary legdrop followed. We thought the match was over, but Rock kicked out. A second legdrop missed, and Rock scored with two more Rock bottoms. The crowd finally returned to his side when he set up the people's elbow. The most electrifying move in sports entertainment today capped off one of the most exciting matches in the Federation's history.

**THE WINNER:** The Rock, when he pinned Hogan at 16:23.

**THE REAL WINNER:** Hogan, who proved that he still has a few spectacular matches left in him. Before WrestleMania, critics were wary of how he'd perform in the ring. His early matches in the WWF—especially the match on *Raw* that saw Hogan team up with Hall and Nash to take on The Rock and Steve Austin—were nothing of which he could be proud. Hall and Nash wrestled most of that match, so Hogan was protected well. If anything, a whole lot of wrestling insiders weren't worried that the Hogan-Rock match was going to be a letdown—they *knew* that it was going to

be one. They were worried about the degree of the letdown. Kudos to Hogan (and Rock, too) for making sure that didn't happen.

**THE REAL LOSER:** Rock, who was booed mercilessly all match long. Even though he's the people's champion, he has a very odd love/hate relationship with the people at times. Just look at the buildup to last year's WrestleMania X-Seven. Rock heard a lot of boos even though he was the babyface to Steve Austin's heel. This year, he got the same reaction going against Hogan. Despite his popularity, the fans seem like they really want to root against him every now and then. One thing is for sure: It would be interesting to see Rock embrace another heel run. We're just not sure that he's ready to do that. Hollywood studio executives might get wary of casting him if he started hearing "Rocky sucks" chants week in and week out.

**ANOTHER WINNER:** Vince McMahon, who took a gamble by bringing Hogan into the WWF.

**TWO MORE LOSERS:** Steve Austin and Ric Flair. Both of these men had the right to be involved in a match to decide the "absolute best ever." Instead, they had to watch from the back.

**THE MATCH:** Jazz vs. Lita vs. Trish Stratus in a triple threat match for the women's title

**THE ACTION:** A whole lot of tussling, hair-pulling, and kicking. Lita and Trish tried to team up on Jazz early, but Jazz fought off the dual assault. Jazz kicked Stratus out of the ring so that she could concentrate on Lita, but the move backfired as Lita was able to focus only on Jazz in return. A couple of quick right hands followed up by a huracanrana and belly-to-back suplex variation almost won Lita the match, but Jazz kicked out of the pin attempt. Jazz then perched Lita on the top turnbuckle, but Stratus ran into the ring and rolled up Jazz for a two-count. She then took Lita down with a bulldog. Jazz tried to capitalize by splashing Lita and going for the pin, but it wasn't enough to keep Lita's shoulders pinned to the mat.

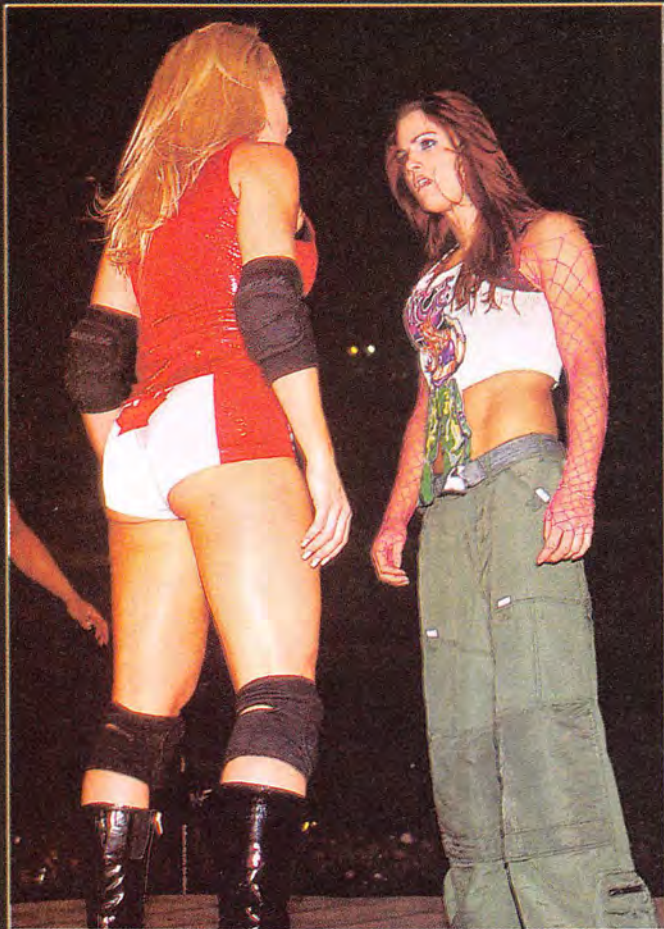
A fisherman's suplex by Jazz on Stratus almost won Jazz the match, but Lita broke up the count. Shortly thereafter, Lita and Stratus started throwing blows at one another, and Lita got the better of the exchange. The match continued as a free-for-all until Jazz took Lita off the top rope and brought her down to the mat with a fisherman's suplex.

**THE WINNER:** Jazz, who retained her women's title when she pinned Lita at 6:15.

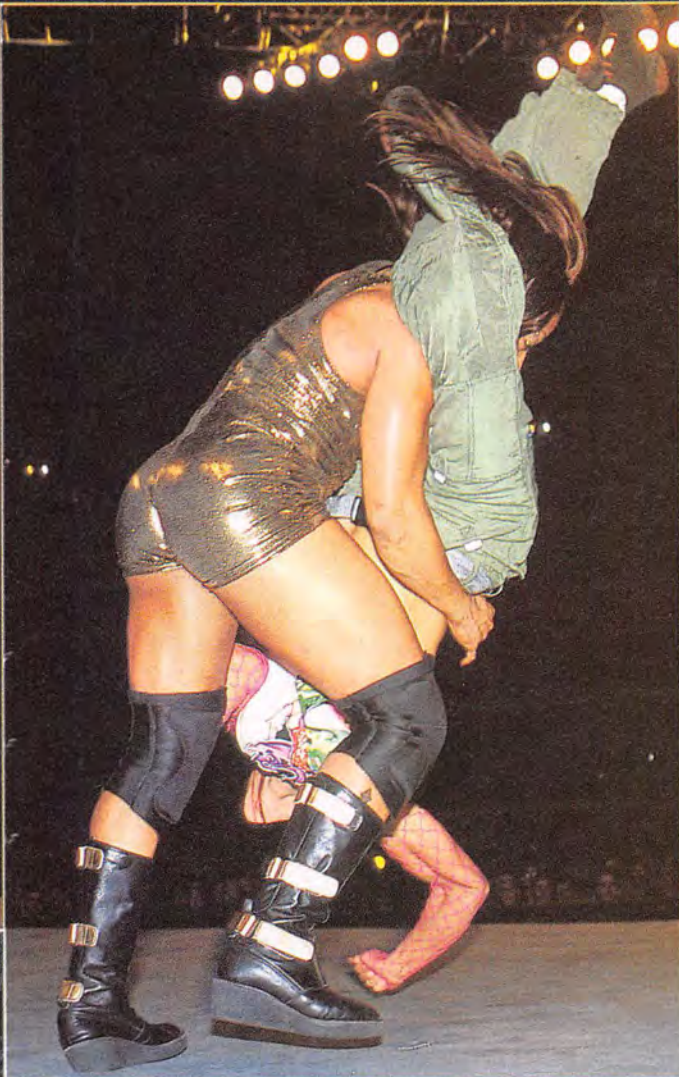
**THE REAL WINNER:** Stratus, who has come a long way since her WWF debut. She might not be the best woman wrestler in the world, but for being such a hot blonde bombshell, she's damn good!

**THE REAL LOSER:** Joanie Laurer, formerly Chyna, who probably thought that she'd be back in the WWF in time to compete in this match. The women's division has actually gotten stronger since her departure.





Had Trish Stratus and Lita not been so angry with each other (above) and had they been able to work together effectively, they would have had a much better chance of ending Jazz' title reign. Lita's huracanrana stunned Jazz (right), but it wasn't enough to finish her off. Since this match followed Hogan vs. Rock, nobody could be a really huge winner.



**THE MATCH:** Triple-H vs. Chris Jericho for the undisputed WWF championship

**THE ACTION:** Helmsley and Jericho have had their fair share of show-stopping matches, but at WrestleMania X8, they had to step it up a notch. If they didn't, their match would be overshadowed by the Rock-Hogan classic.

Unfortunately, Triple-H's injured leg would prevent this match from being their best effort.

Jericho went after Triple-H's leg early, but Triple-H defended it well by going on the offensive. When Helmsley went for his high knee, though, his leg gave a bit when he landed. It didn't take long for Jericho to back bodydrop Helmsley over the top rope.

Jericho did too much bragging, though, and Triple-H regained the advantage. At 4:15, Triple-H tried to even the score by taking away Jericho's vertical base. He kicked Jericho's legs out from under him twice, then put Jericho in the figure-four leglock. Only Stephanie McMahon's interference prevented Helmsley from holding on to that submission hold for a very long time.

A couple of minutes later, Jericho took a page from

Helmsley's playbook but added something extra to it. After ramming Triple-H's leg around the ringpost, Jericho strapped on the figure-four around the ringpost, a la Bret Hart. Unfortunately for him, the hold is an illegal one, and referee Earl Hebner forced Jericho to break.

Jericho continued the assault on Triple-H's leg, but Triple-H continued to fight through the pain, and, at 10:18, he delivered an Arn Anderson-inspired spinebuster. With 14 minutes gone, Triple-H tried to pedigree Jericho on top of the announcers' table, but was instead back bodydropped through the table himself. Sensing victory, Jericho threw Helmsley back into the ring and tried to finish Triple-H off with the lionsault.

When the subsequent pin attempt didn't get it done, Jericho fought until he had Helmsley in the Walls of Jericho in the middle of the ring. Helmsley powered out of the hold and seconds later DDT'd Jericho onto a steel chair. This prompted Stephanie to get in the ring, but Triple-H grabbed her and pedigreed her (you knew it was coming) at 17:15. One minute later, after fighting off a Y2J chair shot and pedigree attempt,



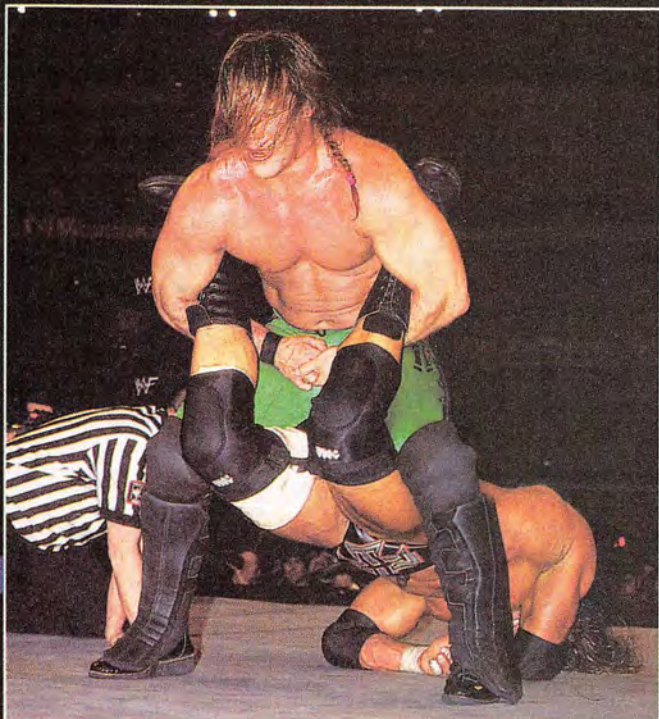
Helmsley wrapped the match up with a pedigree of his own.

**THE WINNER:** Triple-H, who pinned Jericho at 18:39 to win the undisputed WWF championship.

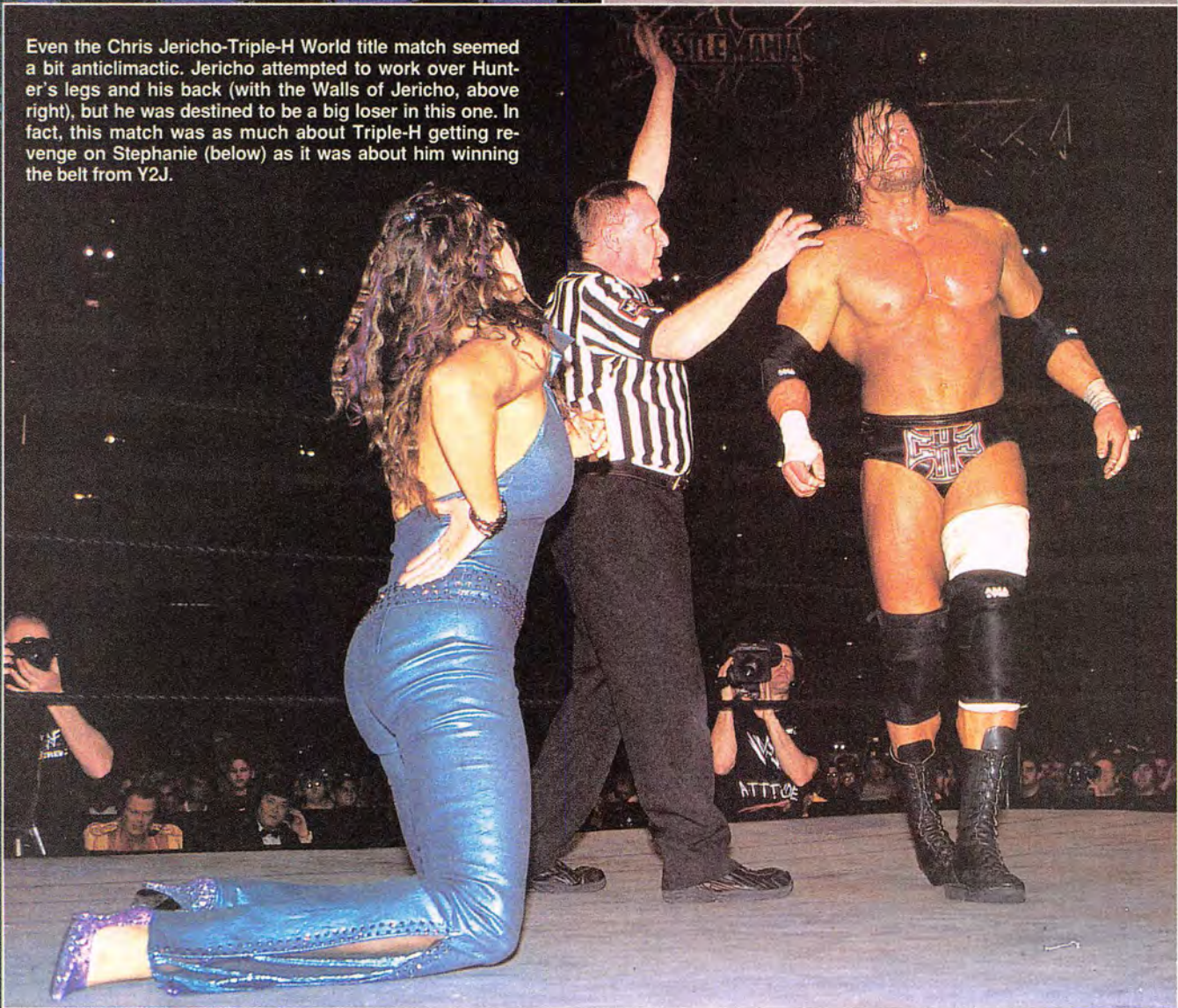
**THE REAL WINNER:** Drowning Pool. While performing Triple-H's intro music, the lead singer of the group told a rather dead crowd, "I can't hear you." One second later, he could hear the crowd loud and clear—but not because he asked for a response. The second that question left his lips, Triple-H walked through the WrestleMania entranceway and garnered a huge pop.

Years from now, we bet the Drowning Pool guys will still be talking about how they popped 68,000 wrestling fans at WrestleMania.

**THE REAL LOSER:** Jericho, whose feud with Triple-H was overshadowed by Stephanie's presence. We would have liked to have seen Jericho try to get himself over without Stephanie's help. We don't know if he would have, but it sure would have been interesting to watch. □



Even the Chris Jericho-Triple-H World title match seemed a bit anticlimactic. Jericho attempted to work over Hunter's legs and his back (with the Walls of Jericho, above right), but he was destined to be a big loser in this one. In fact, this match was as much about Triple-H getting revenge on Stephanie (below) as it was about him winning the belt from Y2J.





# **REDNECK IN SEARCH OF A GOLD BELT:** **JAMIE KNOBLE'S** **ONLY ALTERNATIVE** **TO A BUTT-KICKIN'...** **FROM HIS DADDY!**

If comedian Jeff Foxworthy has a favorite wrestler, it has to be Jamie Knoble. The former Jung Dragon now represents the land of trailer parks, gun racks, and cheap beer. Will that finally make his daddy happy?

By Harry Burkett

**J**AMIE KNOBLE JUST might be a redneck. He shows it proudly: the red and black checkerboard flannel shirt, the oversized feed-and-seed baseball cap, and the fluorescent orange vest he wears when it isn't even hunting season. Do his dogs sleep under his porch? You bet. He thinks the last line of "The Star-Spangled Banner" is "Gentlemen, start your engines!" And, yes, he probably owns more belt buckles than pairs of pants.

He's proud of his heritage and remembers his childhood fondly. Most importantly, Jamie recalls how his father motivated him to succeed in life. Dear ol' Dad has always offered the right incentive.

His advice about good grades? "You'd better get a 'C' next time, boy, or you'll get the strap!"

His advice about women? "If I find out you got her name out of a bathroom stall at that truck stop, I'll tan your hide!"

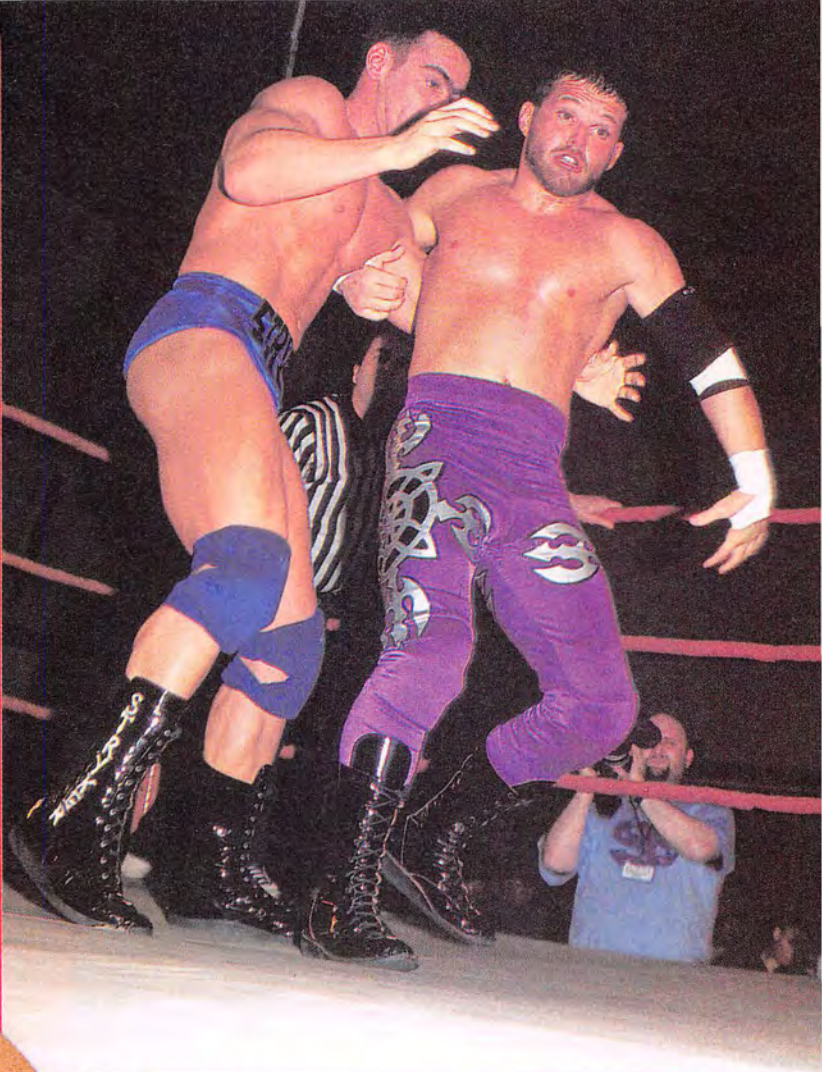
His advice about wrestling? "You get yourself a gold belt, or I'll kick your butt!"

At least that's the story according to Jamie Knoble. The West Virginia native has unleashed a new persona on the Heartland Wrestling Association, one he kept hidden during his time in WCW. Gone is the mystical American son of the Orient, "Jamie-san" of The Jung Dragons. Gone is the straight-laced partner of Evan Karagias.

Behold the new and improved Jamie "By God" Knoble!

"Here in the HWA, I've had a chance to be myself," said Knoble. "That's where my daddy comes into it. He's guided me throughout most of my life, and it doesn't make sense for him to stop now. So if I mess up, that reflects bad on him."





Jamie Knoble's daddy must have loved his performance in the opening round of this year's Super 8 tournament. He defeated one of his rivals from the HWA, Matt Stryker. But that one impressive win didn't get him any gold belts, or even a trophy.

Photos by Brandi Mankiewicz





Knoble hung right with eventual Super 8 winner Donovan Morgan—he even staggered him with some well-executed suplexes—but he lost to the Pro Wrestling NOAH star in the semifinals. That loss might have earned him a butt-kickin' from his daddy if he had dared to drive home to West Virginia that night.

Jamie Knoble's daddy didn't raise no fool. His winning record in the HWA proves that. Along with his change in persona, Knoble's in-ring style has changed considerably since he teamed with Kaz Hayashi and Jimmy Yang in WCW. He has a newfound intensity and prefers brawling to high-flying. That's worked to his advantage, too. Knoble's most common tactic is to lure his foe into a knockdown, drag-out fistfight, then unleash an amazing maneuver, sometimes a power bomb out of nowhere or a pumphandle slam.

"Now he keeps his opponent guessing," said HWA promoter and trainer Les Thatcher. "If you do five huracanranas or six suicide dives per match, that gets boring and predictable fast. I don't care how spectacular they are. Now he gives the fans an old-fashioned brawl, and then one or two of those Jung Dragon-type moves to really get them buzzing.

"The redneck thing? I think he can identify with that a little easier than being some kind of Oriental warrior. If wearing the flannel works for him, that's great."

Yes, the flannel is working for him. Knoble beat Matt Stryker for the HWA cruiserweight title late last year in Louisville, Kentucky, and, of course, his first phone call was to his dad. "I couldn't wait to tell Daddy about me winnin' the cruiserweight belt," recalled Knoble. "On top of everything else, I did it right there in Louisville, and that's the center of the universe as far as Daddy is concerned."

Considering the quality of HWA's cruiserweight division, even Jamie's daddy couldn't expect him to keep the gold forever. Shannon Moore defeated Knoble for the belt on January 9 in Cincinnati. "I was hangin' my head low after that," confessed Knoble. "Daddy had done told all my aunts, uncles, nieces, and nephews. Darn, he even told the fella down at the auto parts store. But just when I thought he was gonna give me a tongue-lashin', Daddy said he didn't expect me to always win, but he said I'd better not darn well quit. And as long as I kept tryin', that would be okay. He didn't raise no coward, and I can't let him down. Daddy did say I'd better win back that belt because he knows I have it in me."

To do that, Knoble must go through several other cruiserweight contenders, including B.J. Whitmer and Maven. He hopes a shot at cruiserweight champion Chad Collyer, who beat Moore for the title on February 13, is in his immediate future. But it won't be easy.

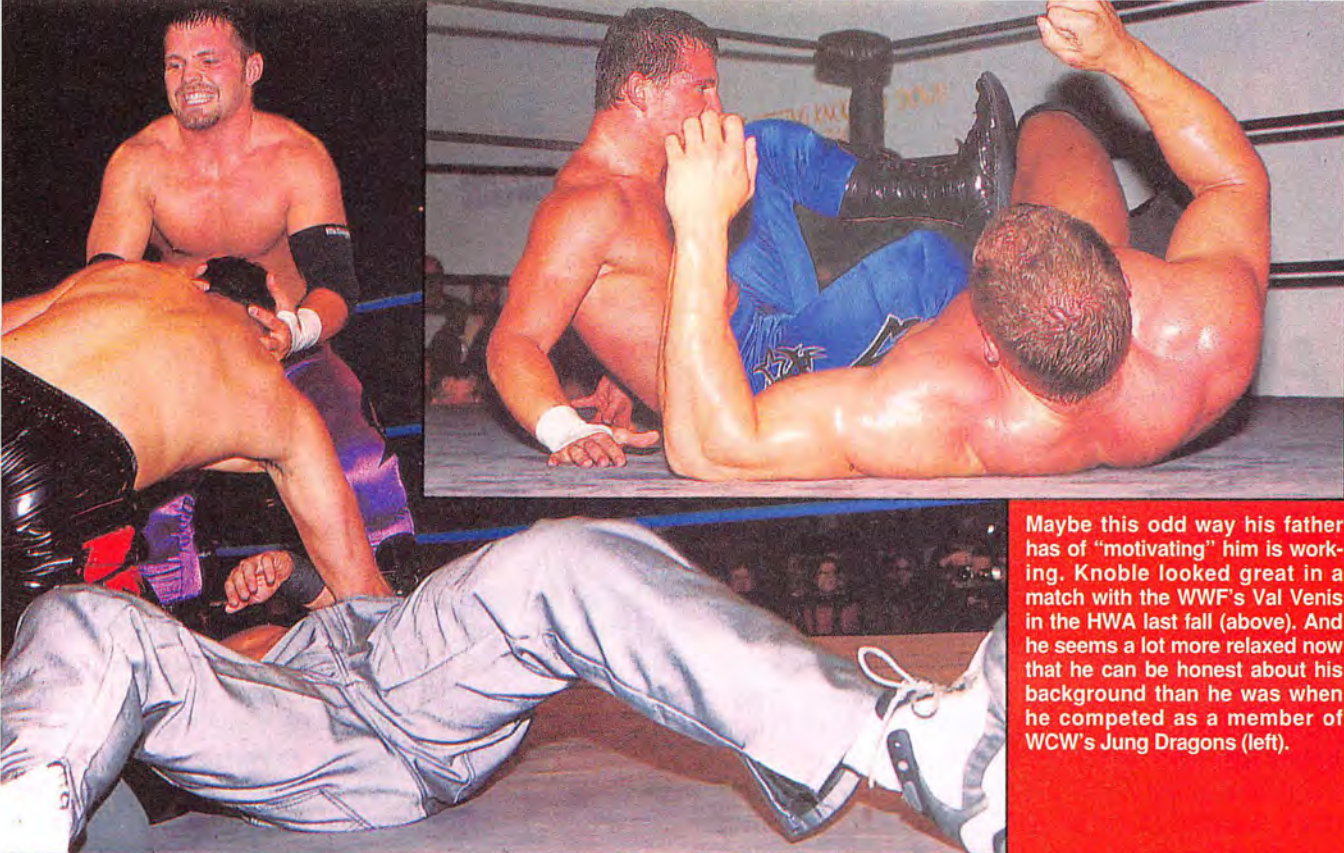
"Yeah, Jamie's a redneck all right," commented Moore. "WCW did its best to shield fans from that fact. They put a mask on him, called him 'Jamie-san,' and hardly admitted he was American, let alone a Southerner. Then they put him with Evan. I don't think they even gave him a chance to speak on TV."

There are plenty of Southerners in wrestling, and Northern promoters tend to unfairly stereotype them. It is well-known that Vince McMahon isn't wild over Southerners drawlin' on WWF microphones. Former WCW creative director Vince Russo brought the insider term to light, calling them "horn-yackers." The two Vinces shouldn't be condemned, however, because TV station managers

Photo by Gary Dineen







Maybe this odd way his father has of "motivating" him is working. Knoble looked great in a match with the WWF's Val Venis in the HWA last fall (above). And he seems a lot more relaxed now that he can be honest about his background than he was when he competed as a member of WCW's Jung Dragons (left).

who openly seek accent-neutral news anchors and announcers for their programs reflect the same attitudes.

Fans who enjoyed "Jamie-san" and Jamie Knoble, the silent partner of Evan Karagias, probably never suspected he was born south of the Mason-Dixon Line. Why then does he embrace his redneck character with such gusto? Will it handicap his career? Knoble could go the way of "The Rebel" Dick Slater and Freddie Joe Floyd. He could wind up like Tommy Rich, with nothing left but a few extra pounds and too many battle scars. And, of course, everyone knows about the "Armstrong curse."

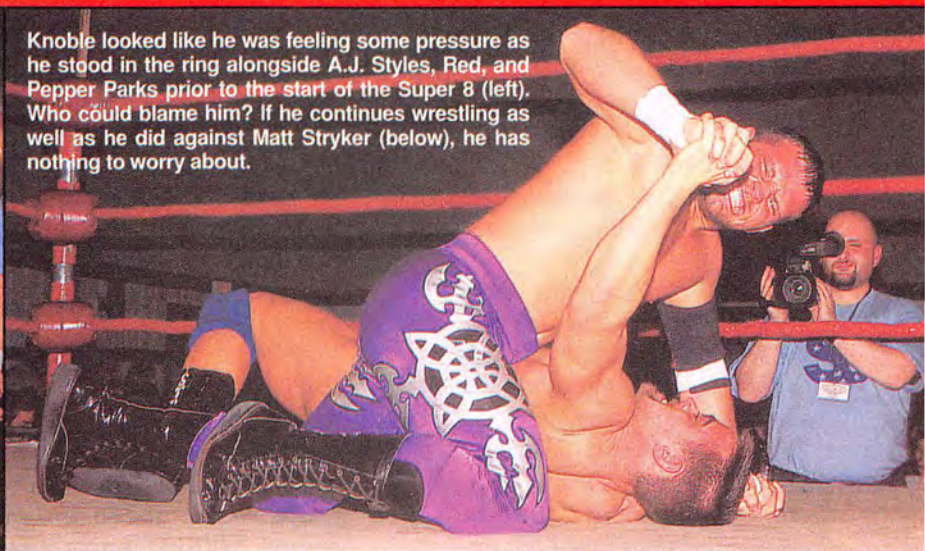
Knoble might be an exception. HWA fans voted him

the best cruiserweight of 2001. He made an impressive showing at the 2002 Super 8 tournament, at which he defeated HWA rival Stryker in the opening round before losing to Donovan Morgan—the eventual winner—in the semifinals. Not too long ago, his effort against Val Venis in an HWA-sanctioned match impressed WWF talent scouts. And, as a side benefit, he is accompanied to the ring by the heart-stopping Helena Heavenly, whose phone number would be a compliment to any truck stop restroom. Obviously, she isn't turned off by Knoble's redneck ways.

If Knoble continues turning in great performances, neither will the WWF. And that'll sure make his daddy proud. □



Knoble looked like he was feeling some pressure as he stood in the ring alongside A.J. Styles, Red, and Pepper Parks prior to the start of the Super 8 (left). Who could blame him? If he continues wrestling as well as he did against Matt Stryker (below), he has nothing to worry about.





# HULK HOGAN

**"THE FANS KNOW WHO WRESTLING'S TRUE ICON IS!"**

**W**HILE THE ROCK vs. Hulk Hogan match at WrestleMania X8 never threatened to go down as a technical classic, it far exceeded its hype as a dramatic masterpiece. At times, it looked as if the participants were more perplexed by the fans than by each other. From the time the first notes of Jimi Hendrix's "Voodoo Chile" played, Hogan had the fans on his side. Still, jaws must have started dropping around the world when the Toronto crowd broke into "Rocky sucks!" chants—and none harder or faster than The Rock's.

And even though Rock eventually scored the pinfall victory, Hogan left WM X8 with much more than a win. He left with vindication. Evidence that yes, indeed, he is a professional wrestling icon. Yes, he still has a lot to give to professional wrestling, and no, the fans don't care that he's well past his prime.

However, Hogan also left WrestleMania with two sorely vexed partners: Scott Hall and Kevin Nash. Angered by Hogan's fan pandering and show of respect for his opponent, Hall and Nash launched a postmatch attack on Hollywood that resulted in a tenuous partnership between Hogan and The Rock.

Threatened by Hogan's distrust of The Rock, his long-standing ties with the NWO, and a short but violent history, this uneasy alliance could crumble just as quickly as it was born. Add to this volatile mix the ramifications of the WWF's recent brand expansion draft, and you come to understand that WWF fans are poised on the pre-

cipice of something that could impact the state of the game.

Like him or not, Hulk Hogan is once again in the top tier mix in the WWF, and not because he used his political sway to arrange it so. This time 68,000 fans (or at least a vocal majority of them) let it be known that they want him there.

Senior Writer Frank Krewda recently spoke with Hogan about his WM X8 bout and how he thinks it will shape this new chapter in his career.

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***"When the people saw me doing my thing, it was like old times, brother. They were witnessing greatness and they were on Hollywood's side. The Rock could have pinned me 10 times and the fans still wouldn't have cared, because they know who made professional wrestling what it is today."***

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**Q:** Prior to your match with Curt Hennig a few months before WrestleMania X8, it had been a long time since you went anything close to 20 minutes in the ring with an opponent. Obviously you prepared yourself mentally and physically for your bout with The Rock. But no amount of focus could have prepared you for what went down in Toronto on March 17.

**A:** Well, I've said it before, but that night really drove the point home. Nothing surprises me

about the WWF fans, and that's the truth. But to say I wasn't surprised by the reception I got would be a flat-out lie, man.

**Q:** Give me a sense of what was going through your mind when you heard those "Hogan" chants.

**A:** Shock. Surprise. I mean, I'd just run over the people's champion with a semi a few weeks before 'Mania and now they were chanting, "Rocky sucks!" I guess the fans in Toronto remembered what it was like to watch a real wrestling icon in the ring.

**Q:** I guess. Speaking of that incident, do you find it at all peculiar that The Rock has seemingly befriended you? Maybe I'm a little nuts, but I know I'd have trouble showing respect for somebody who tried to run me over with a truck.

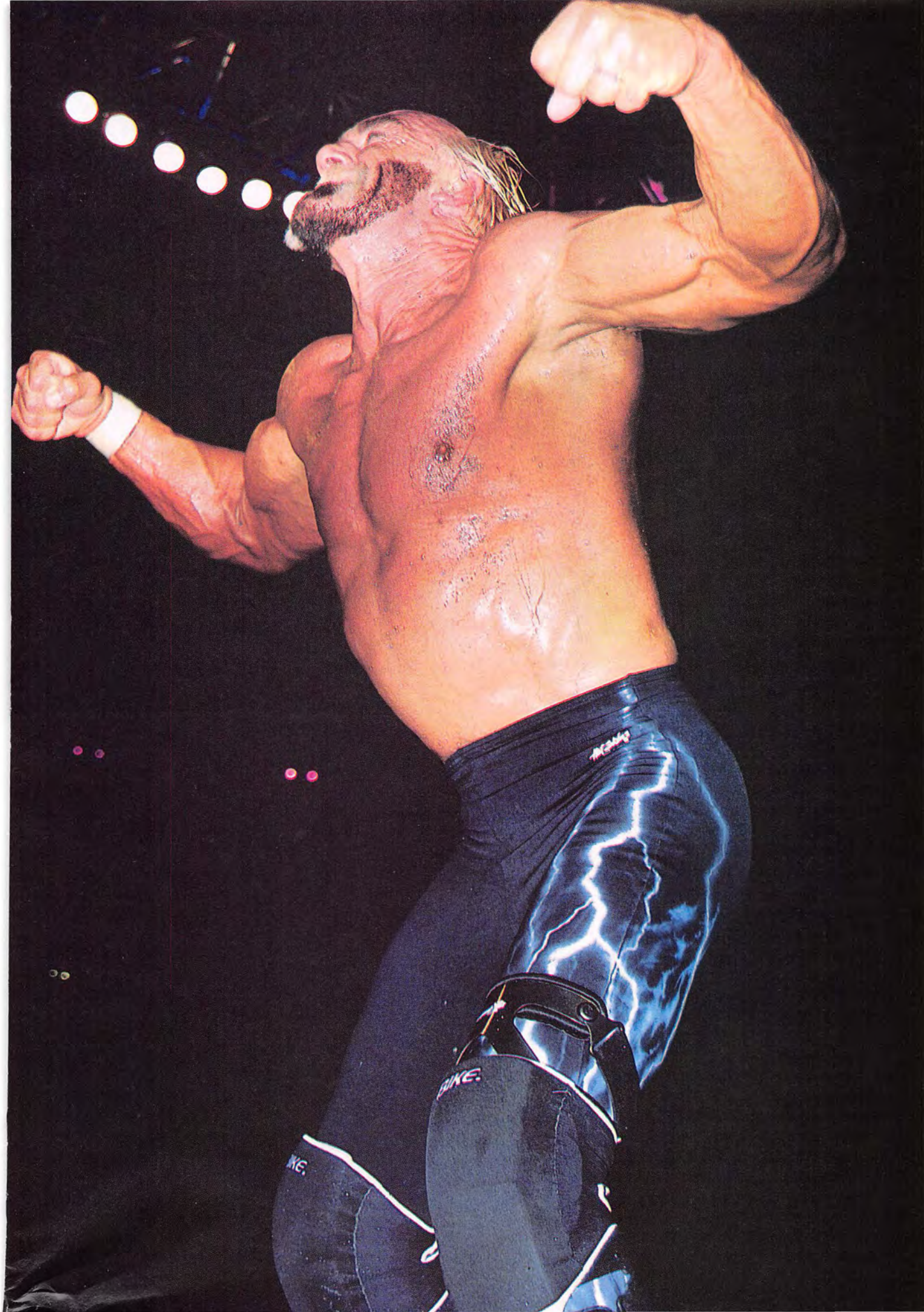
**A:** Take it easy now, dude. Nobody tried to murder anyone. That was just the NWO having some fun. You know, me, Scotty, and big Kev like to play rough sometimes. No harm, no foul, man. But to answer your question, no, I don't find it peculiar at all. The Rock is a smart dude. He knows his role in the WWF now that Hulk Hogan has come back to the WWF ... finally! (Laughs)

**Q:** And what would that role be?

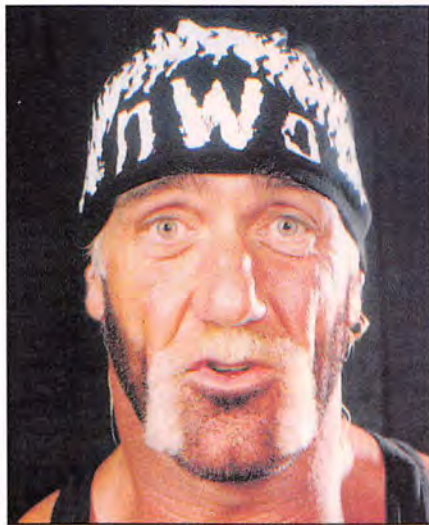
**A:** I don't know. If he wants to run with me, I let him know the opportunity is there. He's welcome to follow my lead.

**Q:** How can you say that when Rock pinned you in the middle of the ring?







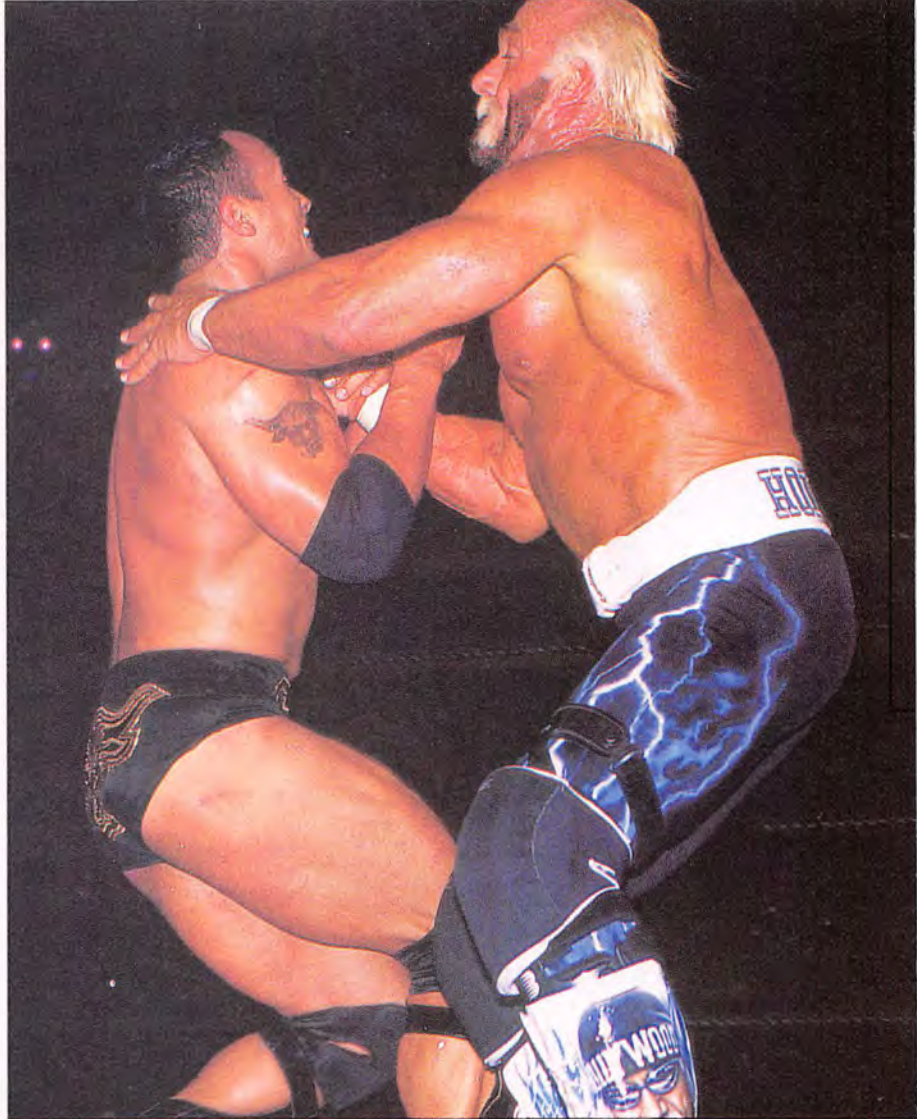


***"Let's face it, no wrestler has had the impact I've had and nobody ever will. And that's no knock on The Rock. He's got as much talent and charisma as anyone out there, and he's a damn good wrestler. But let's see him stand the test of time, man."***

**A:** True, Rock did get the pin. But nobody in the SkyDome was there to see that. The fans were Hulking out, man. When the people saw me doing my thing, it was like old times, brother. They were witnessing greatness and they were on Hollywood's side. The Rock could have pinned me 10 times and the fans still wouldn't have cared, because they know who made professional wrestling what it is today. They know who made the WWF. They know who's been selling out arenas for over 20 years. The fans know who wrestling's true icon is!

**Q:** Icon. The word has a vague meaning, especially when applied to professional wrestling. What qualifies you, or any other wrestler for that matter, to be an icon?

**A:** You want to know what an icon is? Just look at the replay of WrestleMania. Nobody else can bring a crowd to its feet with just one note of his entrance



music like Hollywood. Nobody else can electrify a building like I did. Let's face it, no wrestler has had the impact I've had and nobody ever will. And that's no knock on The Rock. He's got as much talent and charisma as anyone out there, and he's a damn good wrestler. But let's see him stand the test of time, man. Hulk Hogan is for life.

**Q:** For life, huh? Now there's a catchphrase that raises some questions. Namely, what's your standing with the NWO? Kevin Nash ran you down pretty good the following night on *Raw*.

**A:** Well, you got me there, dude. I don't know what's going on with Scott and big Kev. Maybe they're just blowing off some steam. Maybe they're frustrated. All I can tell you is when I say, "NWO for life," I mean it.

**Q:** Did you mean it when you broke out the yellow and red at the end of your WCW run?

**A:** I was just giving the fans what they wanted, dude. It was clear the WCW fans wanted the icon back, so I just went with the flow. If that's what's bothering Hall and Nash, then they'll just have to get used to it. When they get to my position in this industry, they can start calling the shots. Right now, there's only room for one icon in the WWF: Hulk Hogan.

**Q:** That may be. But to hear Hall and Nash tell it, you guys weren't brought to the WWF to become icons or even to give the fans what they want. You guys were brought here by Vince McMahon to do a job on the existing WWF superstars, right or wrong?

**A:** Let's see, I ran over The Rock





The Rock vs. Hulk Hogan match will go down as one of the most memorable and exciting bouts a lot of people have ever seen (opposite page, left). Now Hogan and Rock are allies (above), but for how long? Even Hogan isn't convinced it will last.

with a truck. I whipped The Rock within an inch of his life with my belt. And I pinned The Rock in a handicap match. Big Kev hasn't done a damn thing and Scott Hall couldn't even beat Steve Austin with Kev's help. And you saw how fast they ran once I dropped the big boot on Scott the night after WrestleMania. If you ask me, Hollywood Hogan is the only one holding up his end of the deal. Besides, I didn't attack Hall and Nash; they attacked me.

**Q:** And ironically, it's been The Rock who's come to your defense. Any chance of you and The Rock forming a lasting partnership?

**A:** Never say never in this business, dude. And there's no doubt that The Rock gets Hollywood Hogan's stamp of approval. He's tough and he's got a natural talent for this business. But Rock has many roads to travel before anyone puts him in my league. You never know for sure whose side you'll be on.

**Q:** So there's a chance you could end up back with Hall and Nash after all.

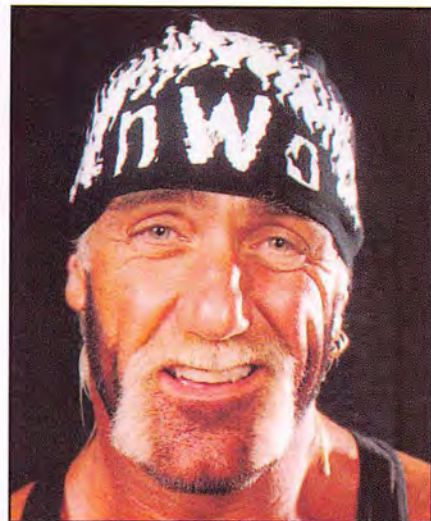
**A:** Of course. But depending how

this brand extension stuff shakes out, I might end up squaring off against Kev or Scott. Look, the NWO changed this industry a few years ago. I go back with Scott and Kev a lot longer than I go back with The Rock. Even the tightest families bicker. Me, Kev, and Scott have locked horns before. But it always seems to work out.

**Q:** That said, would it be foolish for The Rock to trust you?

**A:** It would be foolish for me to trust The Rock 100 percent. The Rock acts like he has my back, but how do I know he's not just biding his time, waiting for the chance to run me over with an 18-wheeler, or to whip me with a belt? Remember, I offered my hand in friendship and wished The Rock luck for the match at WrestleMania and he responded by giving me a Rock bottom. I made the mistake of trusting The Rock then, and an icon doesn't make the same mistake twice. □

Hogan wrestled only one singles match in the WWF (since his comeback) before his showdown with The Rock, a victory over Rikishi at a house show in Florida. Who knew Hogan had such a special match left in him? Who knew the fans wanted to cheer him so lustily?

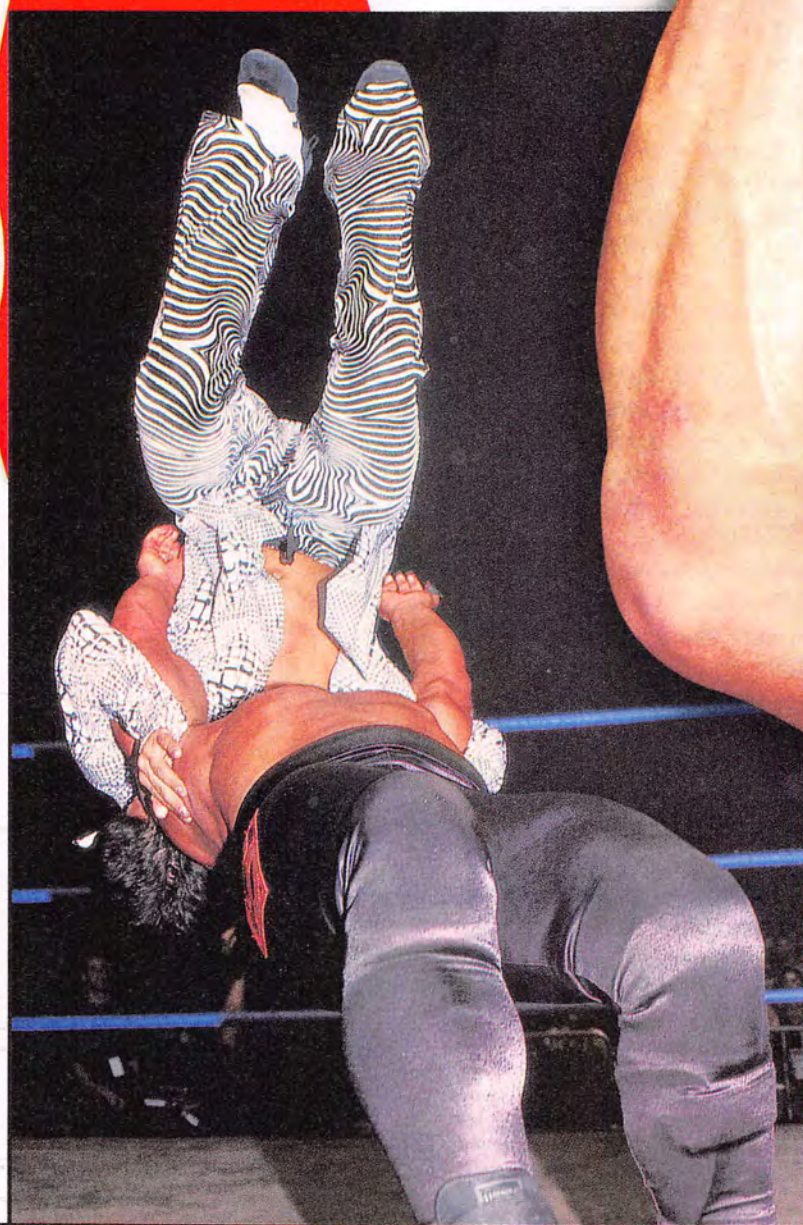


***"Let's see, I ran over The Rock with a truck. I whipped The Rock within an inch of his life with my belt. And I pinned The Rock in a handicap match. Big Kev hasn't done a damn thing and Scott Hall couldn't even beat Steve Austin. If you ask me, Hollywood Hogan is the only one holding up his end of the deal."***





# Scott Steiner'sst



Poor Disco Inferno. He didn't have a prayer of doing anything in his match with Scott Steiner, if you could even call that a match. A few brutal suplexes and he was pretty much history. At least it was over quickly for him.



# Rockpiled sadism

## Is anyone safe from his wrath?

The doctors wonder whether Scott Steiner's days in the ring should be over. The WWF isn't sure whether to sign him. And even the WWA isn't sure what his role should be. Meanwhile, a seething "Big Poppa Pump" is about ready to explode

By Dan Murphy

**O**NE OF LAS VEGAS' most photographed landmarks sits just south of the Mandalay Bay Resort and Casino on Las Vegas Boulevard. For more than 30 years, the sign has greeted both high rollers and work-weary pleasure-seekers. With five simple words, it salutes each guest with a subtle hint of the luxury, glamour, and decadence that awaits him or her in Sin City.





Steiner has one of the most wicked clotheslines in the game today (above left), yet he won't be able to use it very often if his foot problem persists. Two years ago, he terrorized Booker T's wife just for the hell of it (above right). Could we see similar behavior from him in the future if he doesn't find the proper outlet for his sadism?

"Welcome to Fabulous Las Vegas."

Fabulous.

Vegas, baby, Vegas.

Provided you still have a few bucks in your pocket when you leave, what's not to like about Las Vegas? Women, gambling, bright lights, women in revealing outfits, 80-plus-degree weather, women in bikinis ... it's damn near impossible to be in a bad mood in Las Vegas. That is, unless you're Scott Steiner.

Vegas would seem to be the ideal place for "Big Poppa Pump." Steiner loves living the good life. He loves making (and spending) money with a bunch of his hooches in tow. You'd think an evening at the Bellagio, followed by some entertainment downtown, would be the perfect evening for "The Genetic Freak."

Maybe 16 months ago, it would have been. Maybe six months from now, it will be again. But when Steiner landed in Vegas for the WWA's Revolution pay-per-view at the Aladdin Hotel and Casino in late-February, bikinis and blackjack were two of the furthest things from his mind.

Since March 2001, Steiner has been in wrestling limbo. He had been the hottest star in WCW during that promotion's dying days and had established himself as a monster heel with undeniable charisma. A run in the WWF seemed like a certainty, at least once his AOL Time Warner contract expired. "Big Poppa Pump" appeared to be one of the few WCW talents capable of making a seamless transition into the WWF.

Unfortunately, months of carrying WCW on his back had taken a physical toll. In addition to numerous other ailments, Steiner was diagnosed with nerve degeneration that caused a disorder called drop-foot syndrome. The ailment prevents the muscles in his leg from holding the foot



Steiner used the Steiner recliner to finish off Disco in less than three minutes. Knowing Scott Steiner was in the house and was without an opponent for the WWA pay-per-view, Disco probably should not have issued an open challenge. "Big Poppa Pump" was looking for a sacrificial lamb.

in the correct position and causes Steiner to drag his foot if it isn't heavily taped.

On the final edition of *Nitro*, Steiner wrestled through tremendous pain in an unsuccessful effort to defend the WCW World title against Booker T. Over the next several months, Steiner waited out the remainder of his contract with Time Warner. He also underwent rehabilitation for the drop-foot syndrome.

Steiner is anxious to get back in the ring, hurt people, and compete for a major title, but if it's a major title in North America that he wants, the WWF is the place to go. Unfortunately, progress on the drop-foot syndrome has been agonizingly slow so far, and although the WWF has shown interest, no contracts had been signed as of press time.

And on the night of the WWA PPV, Steiner didn't even have an announced opponent, while his old NWO compa-





triot's Scott Hall and Hulk Hogan were preparing for their featured matches at WrestleMania, Steiner was boiling over with rage and frustration. By the time the fourth match on the card got underway, Steiner was *still* without an opponent. He just couldn't take it anymore. He stormed the ring following a hardcore midjet match between Puppet the Psycho Dwarf and Tio and obliterated the vertically challenged competitors. With callous disregard, Steiner delivered a nauseating belly-to-belly suplex to Puppet and brutalized Tio. He then turned his attention to Disco Inferno, who at that moment was starting to regret issuing an open challenge earlier in the evening.

Disco never had a chance. Steiner battered him with a series of punches and kicks, then rocked him with a belly-to-belly suplex. Steiner earned the submission victory in just 2:16 in a match that could have been over in less than half that time.

After the match, Steiner was anything but celebratory. "What the hell do I have to be happy about?" Steiner

screamed. "[Jeff] Jarrett defended his title against Brian Christopher tonight, and I may not even have had a match if I didn't chase down that dancing idiot. If 'Big Poppa Pump' is on the card, he should be in the main event. Otherwise, they're just wasting my time. I don't like it when people waste my time. You got that?"

Steiner may have looked impressive in his annihilation of Disco, but the match revealed little about the condition of his foot. Could it still hold up to the abuse it would inevitably take if he were to resume a regular ring schedule? Is Steiner capable of staying healthy long enough to be considered a legitimate contender, either in the WWA, the WWF, or elsewhere? We don't know. Hell, he probably doesn't know for sure. And that means Steiner is going to have more time to stew over his predicament.

"Steiner's always been high-strung, but his intensity is just off the chart these days," said Bryan Clark,

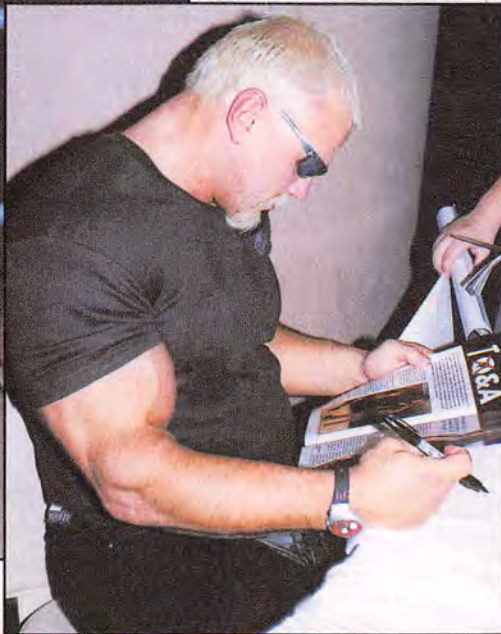
who also competed on the WWA card. "Steiner spent most of his time in Vegas stretching and lifting weights. He didn't socialize with anyone, I never saw him in the casino or at the clubs. He just gave off this vibe that he didn't want to be bothered by anyone. He was dying to get back in the ring and hurt someone again."

Scott's brother, Rick, concurred.

"Anyone who knows squat about this business knows that Scotty is still the most dangerous, most powerful wrestler in the world," Rick said. "Even if he only had one leg to stand on, he could gut

anyone in this business he wanted to. He could walk into any promotion and dominate tomorrow. And you don't even want to know what he can do to Jarrett and Christopher. But no one's giving him the respect he deserves. The whole situation makes me sick. And if it makes me sick, you don't want to know how he feels about it."

Scott Steiner hasn't spent 16 years of his life working to be overlooked on cards in front of less than 3,000 fans. He's tired of waiting for the WWF, and he's not going to allow the wrestling world to forget about him. If that means he has to seriously injure opponents just to stay in the picture, so be it. These days, no one is safe—not anywhere. □



Let's hope that Scott agrees with what he is reading in that magazine, especially if what he is reading is about him. You just never know when this man is going to snap and who will be his target.



# All-Japan Is New

*An Incredible*



What a difference one man can make on the entire Japanese wrestling scene. Keiji Muto's jump from New Japan to All-Japan changed everything in that country. Well, actually, it was the jumps of three key New Japan players that shook up *puroresu*. But Muto was the key player.

By Mike Spillane

**F**ROM THE 1970s forward, the battle for superiority between New Japan Pro Wrestling and All-Japan Pro Wrestling has been an epic one, much like the war American fans observed in the 1990s between World Championship Wrestling and the World Wrestling Federation. While WCW faltered, stumbled, and eventually died, leaving only the WWF to reign supreme, the tale of New Japan and All-Japan is altogether different ... and ongoing.

Just two years ago, a massive departure of talent dealt All-Japan what many figured would be a deathblow.



Hiroyoshi Tenzan and Satoshi Kojima were New Japan's most valuable tag team. They were until January of this year. Kojima jumped to All-Japan with Muto, leaving Tenzan without a partner ... and everyone in New Japan wondering how this all happened.

Photos by Koichi Yoshizawa



The WWF is *the* all-powerful promotion in North America in 2002. There's no reason to believe it won't hold on to that distinction for a long time to come. A few months ago, the same could have been said of New Japan in the Orient. But All-Japan changed everything in a hurry. Now New Japan is wondering what happened ... and what it can do to catch up

# Again

## *Power Shift in the Far East!*

Thirty members of the AJPW roster left the company and helped Mitsuharu Misawa (one of the AJPW defectors) form Pro Wrestling NOAH. In the wake of the exodus, All Japan lost its television program, and fan interest began to plummet.

Just imagine what the WWF would look like if 30 of its wrestlers, led by someone like Steve Austin or The Rock (or both), left at once.

It wasn't all that long ago, really, that All-Japan was squirming on its deathbed: A thin, underdeveloped, star-deficient roster was all the promotion had for most of the last 18 months. Former AJPW star Genichiro Tenryu jumped from New Japan to keep the company from sinking further; he and perennial star Toshiaki Kawada did everything in their power just to keep All-Japan alive. The days of All Japan as a thriving rival in the power struggle with New Japan were long gone.

Seemingly.

In 2001, All-Japan got a much-needed boost when it reached an agreement with New Japan to run some inter-promotional cards. In June, New Japan's Keiji Muto, having reinvented himself with a new look and new finisher (the shining wizard), and surrounded by his teammates in an interpromotional clique called BATT, won the Triple Crown from Tenryu. Muto, at that point, was still a full-time *New Japan* employee, making his title win a landmark in the history of not only All-Japan, but all of *puroresu*. After all, this

New Japan founder Antonio Inoki (above right) is expected to push New Japan wrestlers who show they can also excel in mixed martial arts competition. But the elevation of Tadao Yasuda (below right) to IWGP heavyweight champion status left a lot of observers in the Orient confused.







Kendo Ka Shin (shown grabbing Dajiro Matsui) had been one of New Japan's top junior heavyweights for years, but he's now one of All-Japan's top junior heavyweights. All-Japan barely had a junior division for the longest time. It has one now—a very good one.

oric rise. To both fans and the media, All-Japan appeared as a number-three promotion, trailing dominant New Japan and Misawa's NOAH group. Tenryu and Kawada were All-Japan's only remaining megastars, and part-time stars such as Muto and Hiroshi Hase weren't around enough to spark a serious turnaround for the ailing promotion. As 2001 drew to a close, AJPW was still without a weekly television program, and fan interest was half-hearted at best.

In January 2002, New Japan began to renew contracts with all of its wrestlers, an annual and generally routine process it tackles shortly after New Year's Day. To the chagrin of NJPW management, three of its most important stars would not put their names on the dotted line. Muto, the biggest star in the country, Satoshi Kojima, one-half of NJPW's franchise tag team, and Kendo Ka Shin, the reigning IWGP junior heavyweight champion, snubbed their employer and initiated a war in the process.

Soon it became evident that Muto, Kojima, and Ka Shin were not interested in simply becoming free agents and considering offers that might come their way. They were headed directly for All-Japan, where the shortage of superstars guaranteed they'd make a big impact and perhaps cripple NJPW at the same time. New Japan immediately cried foul, threatened to file lawsuits, denounced AJPW owner Motoko Baba, and proclaimed plans to destroy the rival company. To most it seemed logical that Muto's friend Hiroshi Hase, a former NJPW star himself, orchestrated the jump for the trio of defectors. But the damage was done.

It was almost as if a struggling ECW, with only a few name stars on its roster, suddenly acquired three big names from the WWF, resuscitating itself and wounding the WWF in the process.

The result of all this has been a rebirth for All-Japan. Tenryu, Muto, and Kawada (who recently won the Triple Crown) are three of *puroresu's* most time-honored superstars and champions, and they make for a powerful triumvirate to lead the reinvigorated All-Japan. All-Japan's junior heavyweight division, which has barely been worth mentioning since Dan Kroffat (known briefly in the WWF as Phil Lafon) and Rob Van Dam were regulars in the company in the mid-1990s, is poised to make a major comeback. Kendo Ka Shin will be the man to beat there, and newcomer Kaz Hayashi, who

was not like The Rock winning the WCW World title last year, after the WWF purchased its former rival. These promotions have never been owned by the same people.

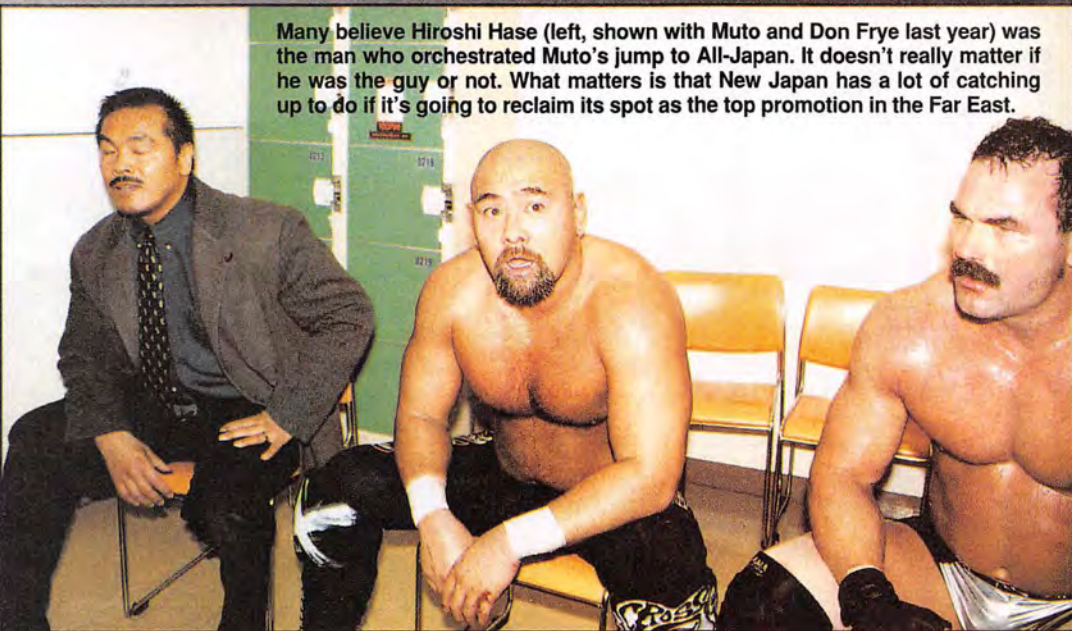
The cross-promotion between the two former rival companies stirred new interest in both groups, but it seemed New Japan would be enjoying most of the spoils of the venture. Its roster was still far stronger, and its top star had All-Japan's championship.

Muto's reign as champion turned out to be more than a surprise in Japan—it became an instant sensation. As the new Triple Crown champion began to pick up momentum, he also picked up more belts, winning both All-Japan's and New Japan's tag titles with BATT partner Taiyo Kea, an AJPW regular. Muto's involvement with All-Japan at this stage can now be viewed as a foreshadowing of things to come.

Even though interest in Muto was reaching a level it had not approached in years, overall interest in All-Japan was not enjoying the same mete-



Many believe Hiroshi Hase (left, shown with Muto and Don Frye last year) was the man who orchestrated Muto's jump to All-Japan. It doesn't really matter if he was the guy or not. What matters is that New Japan has a lot of catching up to do if it's going to reclaim its spot as the top promotion in the Far East.



Hiroiyoshi Tenzan, has opted to stay with New Japan, Kojima will soon be looking for a new partner in AJPW to pursue the tag title. For the time being, however, Kojima will be sticking to singles action and facing down challenges from the likes of "Dr. Death" Steve Williams, George Hines, and

recently sought and received his release from his WWF contract, will help relaunch the all-but-dormant division. All-Japan talent scouts have already begun recruiting new faces for the junior division in hopes of adding some depth.

While Satoshi Kojima's long-time partner,

Nobutaka Araya.

As for New Japan, the long-time frontrunner in the Far East, fans can expect to see a new philosophy to matchmaking and a different in-ring product. The recent ascension of Tadao Yasuda, an overweight, middle-aged mid-carder, to champion status, seems to indicate that NJPW is lost without key stars like Muto and Kojima. Now Yasuda, the IWGP heavyweight champ (some have called him the weakest ever), will have to prove himself worthy and try to maintain the whatever momentum he's gained from fighting in mixed martial arts companies such as Pride. Antonio Inoki, founder of NJPW, has been very vocal about his desire to move New Japan in a fresh direction, with an increased emphasis on those pro wrestlers who can also compete in mixed martial arts competitions.

Unfortunately, Ka Shin, who experienced a career rebirth thanks to a successful mixed fight, is now working for the competition, leaving Inoki with a strange, unlikely blend of remaining stars from which to produce a new superstar. With every new questionable business decision or uninteresting television program, New Japan continues to lose ground as All-Japan gets stronger. While New Japan management continues to point fingers and sling blame over the loss of  *puroresu* 's heavy hitters, All-Japan is negotiating a TV deal with two networks.

All of a sudden, that future looks quite bright. □

Yuji Nagata is one man New Japan will be relying heavily upon in the upcoming months and, most likely, years. There's no question, however, that Inoki's company is short on potential new stars.





# Jarrett vs. Christopher

Not a **SAVAGE** encounter...  
but a worthy WWA debut

A last-minute switch threatened to doom the WWA's Revolution pay-per-view. But Jeff Jarrett and Brian Christopher saved the Las Vegas show with a good ol' Memphis brawl

By Harry Burkett

**W**ORLD WRESTLING ALL-STARS attempted to establish its North American presence in ambitious fashion in February, bypassing house shows, television deals, and elaborate promotional tours. The WWA's first event in the United States was a pay-per-view, titled Revolution, that emanated from the Aladdin Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas.

That wasn't the Australian-based WWA's first foray into the American PPV market, however. The initial offering was a compilation of the company's Australian tour, particularly its heavyweight title tournament, featuring a heavy dose of former WWF and WCW stars, including Jeff Jarrett, Road Dogg, Disco Inferno, and others. Stars such as Brian Christopher, Scott Steiner, and Bret Hart—all of whom made it to the WWA's tour of the United Kingdom and Ireland—were considered top draws for American fans.

To generate more interest, WWA officials decided to book one more name, someone who was as much a mainstream celebrity as a major wrestling star. They announced that Randy Savage, who hadn't wrestled in front of a national audience since 1999, would meet WWA champion Jeff Jarrett in the main event.

Only a couple of weeks before Revolution, rumors circulated that Jarrett would be vacating the WWA title because of conflicts with management. Several insiders predicted he wouldn't be in Las Vegas to defend the championship against Savage.

When February 24 rolled around, however, it was *Savage*—not Jarrett—who did not appear at the Aladdin Casino. At the top of the show, World Wrestling All-Stars promoter Andrew McManus announced that Savage's representatives had halted contract negotiations.

"Some of us were worried in the beginning because everything seemed up in the air," said A.J. Styles, who wrestled in the opener. "We heard Savage wasn't going to be there, and it's disconcerting when one of the main-eventers doesn't show up. But I realized once we got past the announcement and all the rock music, and



Okay, so Brian Christopher doesn't have the star power that Randy Savage has. That didn't prevent him from giving his old friend Jeff Jarrett a very competitive match in the main event of the WWA's Revolution pay-per-view. Maybe Jarrett-Christopher turned out a lot better than Jarrett-Savage would have.









Christopher was absolutely hell-bent on making the most of the opportunity that was put in front of him in Las Vegas. When he had Jarrett flustered, he made sure he didn't get much time to get a breather and refocus.

elimination match. Nova used a slam from the top rope to pin Styles and win the contest.

The match was so thrilling that Savage's absence was no longer a major issue in many fans' minds. In fact, they would have probably forgotten about it altogether if Commissioner Bret Hart hadn't addressed the matter in the very next segment. Admitting his soft spot for second-generation wrestlers, Hart chose Brian Christopher—Jerry Lawler's son—as Savage's replacement in the heavyweight title match. Hart also cited Christopher's success during the last overseas tour.

Would Christopher prove to be a wise choice? The former "Grandmaster Sexay" and member of Too Cool had never been in a pay-per-view main event in his life. Nor had he ever been considered a genuine main-eventer outside his home state of Tennessee. Backstage, several wrestlers and WWA employees questioned the selection of Christopher. Some believed Scott Steiner, Rick Steiner, Jerry Lynn, Sabu, Eddie Guerrero, or even Larry Zbyszko—all of whom appeared on the PPV—would make a better opponent for Jarrett.



In their Memphis glory days, Christopher and Jarrett had a hard time figuring out whether they wanted to be friends or enemies. Most of the time, they chose to be enemies. Don't think that either one of them forgot about their long history.

the wrestling began, we could put on as good a show as anyone."

Indeed, Styles, Chris Daniels, Tony Mamaluke, Low-Ki, Shark Boy, and Nova participated in a breathtaking six-way



Christopher had quite a few near-falls in the PPV main event. He probably would have beaten Jarrett if alternate referee Mark Johnson had been able to finish his three-count here. Instead, original official Marty Valencia, who had been knocked silly by a Christopher superkick earlier, pulled Johnson out of the ring.

"I knew Brian Christopher was fully capable of carrying the match," commented Bryan Clark of Kronik. "It's just that when there's a switch so late in the game, and because people bought tickets expecting to see Savage in the main event, there was a lot more pressure on Jarrett and Christopher to deliver. I mean, that match had to be so great that fans would go home satisfied that Savage didn't make it. If Christopher didn't win the title, he had to come damn close."

Brian Adams agreed with his partner's assessment. "I felt nervous for Brian, but excited, too. If the match didn't go so well, he'd be blamed for it. On the other hand, it could've been his breakout match, making him a regular main-event guy. I guess the fact that Brian had



worked the overseas tours was in his favor, and he'd seen plenty of Jarrett's matches."

Christopher had played a key role in a three-way WWA title match on December 1 in Birmingham, England. He ran to ringside and distracted Scott Steiner, who had attacked him and others with a lead pipe earlier in the evening, which enabled Jarrett to hit Road Dogg with a guitar and retain his belt.

Were Christopher and Jarrett allies? Or was Christopher trying to get into the title picture?

Whether WWA officials realized it or not, Christopher and Jarrett have quite a history. They engaged in one of the hottest Memphis feuds of the early-1990s, trading the USWA Southern championship five times between December 21, 1992, and June 28, 1993. Jarrett ultimately emerged with the title, but that didn't stop Christopher from teaming with his rival by the end of the year. They defeated Rex Hargrove and Koko B. Ware for the USWA tag team belts on November 8, 1993.

There was trouble ahead, though. Later that month, Jarrett abandoned Christopher just prior to a match, forcing him to defend the belts alone. PG-13 cruised to victory.

Jarrett and Christopher knew each other as opponents, then tag team partners, with some bad blood spilled at the end. WWA officials really couldn't have asked for two combatants who were so familiar with each other—and with enough hate to carry them to an entertaining match. If their history hadn't been lost in the mists of time, perhaps the quality of the main event wouldn't have been in question.

Christopher's jive-talking and trash-talking on the microphone got the crowd into the match at the outset. Christopher and Jarrett brawled all the way to the backstage area, then fought through the crowd. It seemed more like Memphis than Las Vegas.

Back in the ring, Christopher surprised the WWA champion with a tornado DDT. Jarrett barely propped his foot on the ropes to avoid a three-count. Christopher delivered a sunset flip power bomb from the apron. Sensing victory, Christopher went for a superkick, but accidentally knocked referee Marty Valencia unconscious.

Christopher knew Jarrett would take advantage of the opening, so he went dirty first. He smashed the champ with a chair and delivered the hip-hop drop.

Referee Mark Johnson rushed in to make the count, but Valencia—still groggy from the superkick—yanked him out of the ring. Jarrett hit Christopher with a guitar. Valencia attempted the count, but Johnson pulled him out. While the referees were brawling, Jarrett threw Johnson over the top rope and executed the stroke on Christopher. Valencia counted the pinfall and declared Jarrett the winner.

"Christopher might or might not have deserved that title shot, but he made the best of it—and I think the fans went home happy," observed WWA commentator Mark Madden. "I hope Savage can make it to the next show but, me personally, I want to see Jarrett whip Christopher's butt in a steel cage. That'll make *me* happy."

A lot of people wouldn't mind seeing a rematch. That says a lot for Jarrett and Christopher ... and the WWA. □



Surprisingly, it wasn't the guitar shot that sealed the victory for Jarrett (above). There was still some referee chicanery to come, but once Jarrett got Johnson out of the ring (below) and executed the stroke, he pulled out a victory.





## Is There A Future For Independent Wrestling?

**"Some promotions just rip off the major leagues in a low-budget manner. I won't list them, but every one of them had a 'World Order' five years ago, and, three years ago, they came up with evil owner storylines, and each had a badass rebel ... In other words, they have no originality and just try to capitalize on fads of the moment."**

**—Harry Burkett**

**I**S THERE MORE to wrestling than the WWF? Until last year, the answer would have been a resounding yes. With the demise of WCW and ECW, casual viewers of **Raw** and **Smackdown** probably don't realize there is a whole other world of wrestling beyond TNN and UPN, namely the independent circuit.

How healthy is that sector of the business? More than 125 promotions were included in last year's "Guide To Professional Wrestling," published in **Wrestle America Annual**. Quantity shouldn't be confused with quality, however, because plenty of indies are struggling. While some groups have grown into legitimate small business-

es, some of the less ambitious promoters are just looking for beer and pizza money on the weekends.

It's unfair to lump all indies into one category. Ohio Valley Wrestling, the Heartland Wrestling Association, Ultimate Pro Wrestling, the East Coast Wrestling Association, Maryland Championship Wrestling, Florida Championship Wrestling, and various NWA affiliates all run quality shows frequently, and some have their own television programs. Save for developmental talent in OVW and the HWA, the vast majority of indie wrestlers will never compete on a major-league level, as superstars in the WWF.

Only an innovative promotion, with a product different from the WWF's, can reach the next level. Where is the next ECW? The next USWA? Or the next Smoky Mountain? In this "Editors' Roundtable," Publisher Stu Saks, Editor-in-Chief Dave Lenker, Managing Editor Brandi Mankiewicz, and Senior Writer Harry Burkett attempt to evaluate the independent scene and its future.

**STU SAKS:** Just about every sport needs a minor league system, a place where managers and coaches can call up talent when necessary. Baseball and hockey have minor leagues, while football and basketball have universities and colleges where they can do their recruiting. The question is this: Does independent wrestling serve that purpose? Or does independent wrestling serve another function? And how does the future look for independents? Brandi, our queen of the indies, what do you think?

**BRANDI MANKIEWICZ:** If you judge independent promotions by how many of their stars make it to the



This year's Super 8 was a showcase of independent wrestling at its finest. As it is every year, the 2002 event was all about outstanding wrestling, not sports entertainment. Jamie Knoble and Matt Stryker were just two of the eight men who put on a great show that night.



A few years ago, a lot of independents used big names from the past such as Greg Valentine and Jake Roberts to try to draw decent crowds. That can work sometimes, but it's not the way to go for a promoter hoping to stay in business for a long time. This kind of approach isn't quite as common in the indies in 2002.



WWF, then you're setting them up for failure. Let's face it: The vast majority of independent wrestlers wouldn't qualify to scrub the inside of a bathroom stall in Stamford, let alone wrestle inside of a WWF ring. I'm sorry ... but there are too many skinny guys who think they're going to be the next Matt or Jeff Hardy. The Hardys were the exceptions. As a rule, the WWF doesn't want scrawny teenagers. If you don't believe me, look at the wrestlers the WWF has signed to developmental contracts, such as R.C. Haas, The Island Boys, Prototype, and Rico Constantino.

**SAKS:** That paints a sad outlook. I would assume that callups from the WWF would be a reasonable gauge of a promotion's success. Let's say that Harvard admits 20 percent of your high school class. Then that would make it a great high school. But what if none of the graduates from a particular high school even make it to college? I'd say that isn't a very good school. Dave, is that the correct barometer of success?

**LENKER:** No, I don't believe so. I don't think the average indy promoter cares how many of his wrestlers make it to the WWF. Now, if that promoter runs a training school, then I suppose it would be a bragging point,

but it wouldn't be the main objective. Most indy wrestlers are doing it for fun, maybe extra money on the weekends, or just because they have a passion for the business. Contrary to the myth, not all indy wrestlers would give their right arm to be in the WWF. Many of them have families, full-time jobs, and are settled down where they like to live. I know investment bankers, supermarket managers, and construction workers who pursue wrestling as a hobby.

**SAKS:** You haven't encouraged me, Dave. No wonder so many indies have gone out of business and so many are struggling. If all these people are just doing it for kicks, how can they be taking it seriously? Why should fans plop down 15 bucks to see these guys?

**MANKIEWICZ:** Oh, that's why all these indies hire modern-day warriors like The Iron Sheik and The Honky Tonk Man. You know, to give fans their money's worth.

**SAKS:** Seriously, though, what can the indies offer fans that the WWF doesn't? If all they're doing is offering pale imitations, then that's not much. What do you think, Harry?

**HARRY BURKETT:** It really depends on the approach. There are some things that all independent pro-

motions offer, such as greater intimacy with the wrestlers, more personal autograph sessions, smaller buildings, more sport than entertainment, slightly lower ticket prices, and bootleg tapes in EP mode. There are three approaches. Some promotions just rip off the major leagues in a low-budget manner. I won't list them, but every one of them had a "World Order" five years ago, and, three years ago, they came up with evil owner storylines, and each had a badass rebel, often with the last name of Austin. In other words, they have no originality and just try to capitalize on fads of the moment. Most of those promotions don't last long.

**SAKS:** Okay, let's stop dwelling on the negative here. I'm anxious for a ray of hope.

**BURKETT:** Well, there are also promotions that really cater to their local fans. Most of the incarnations of Memphis wrestling have done that. Northern Championship Wrestling does it in Quebec by turning their wrestlers into local celebrities. I think a few fans cried when Phil Belanger retired a couple of years ago. Take Maryland Championship Wrestling. Rich Myers, Earl the Pearl, and Platinum Nat can't go to Baltimore's Inner Harbor without fans mobbing



them. With Candie, it's the same way. Bill Behrens has stated that he's keeping NWA Wildside small and regional for it to remain profitable. And he has experience in the TV business, so he should know the right business model to follow. All these promotions cater to local fans with newsletters, doing charity work and booking public appearances.

**MANKIEWICZ:** That's how the old territories used to operate. But the fans take them seriously because

they're so regionalized? We're in the Internet era, remember?

**LENKER:** I think the Internet actually does a lot for the independents. They no longer have to rely on former WWF and WCW wrestlers to sell tickets. Guys like Scoot Andrews, Christopher Daniels, Michael Modest, and Donovan Morgan—partly because they travel all around the country and partly because of their Internet exposure—can sell plenty of tickets on their own. It's like what our magazines did in the 1970s and 1980s. We highlighted regional stars in a national forum, and it gave fans a way to connect. Think of Jerry Lawler in Memphis, the Von Erichs in Texas, and Billy Jack Haynes in the Pacific Northwest. Because of magazines like ours, their

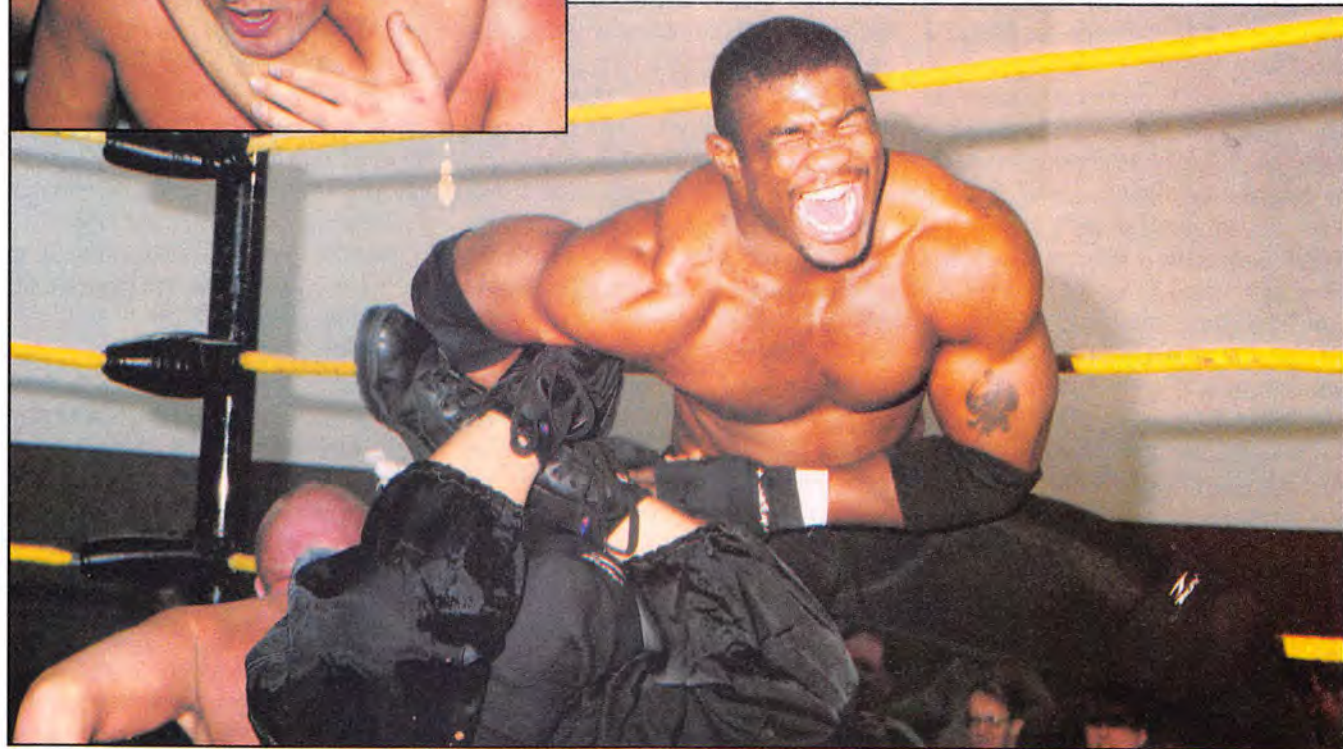
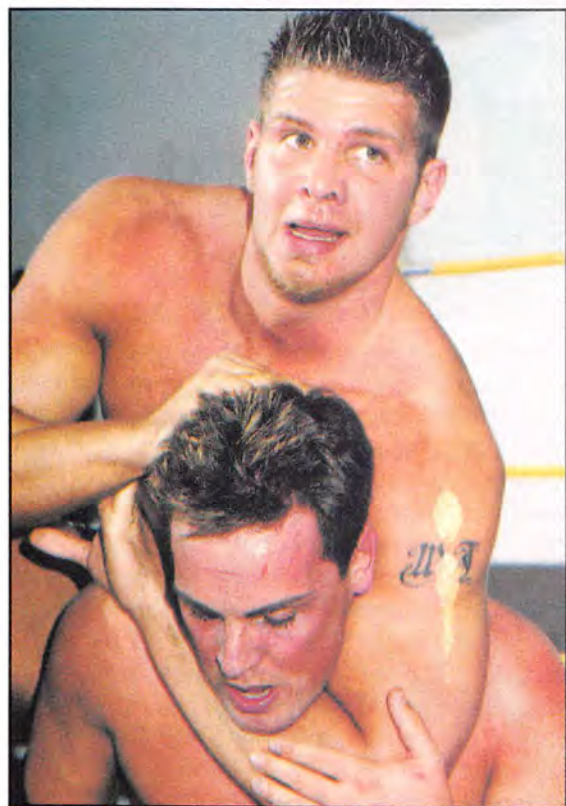
The WWF developmental system has added a new and exciting dynamic to the independent scene. OVW, for instance, features future WWF stars such as Shelton Benjamin (below), young wrestlers hoping to show the WWF they are deserving of another shot, such as Mark Jindrak and David Flair (left), and some pure independent talent.

reputations preceded them before they entered other territories and, as a result, they were top attractions. As the Internet and new technologies develop, I predict good things will happen for the independents.

**SAKS:** That's an interesting view. Harry, you mentioned the fad-of-the-moment indies, and the indies that cater to local fans. You said there was a third type. What is it?

**BURKETT:** That's the promotion that doesn't necessarily cater to local fans, but carves out an alternative niche. These are the promotions that have rabidly loyal fans who will travel hundreds of miles to see them. ECW and Smoky Mountain did that in the past. To a lesser extent, I would put Xtreme Pro Wrestling in that category because a certain percentage of the population will always like their blend of sex and violence. There's Combat Zone Wrestling, which is as hardcore as you get these days. And I think for a mix of cruiserweight, old-school-style, and Japanese-style wrestling, the ECWA in Delaware has its followers.

**SAKS:** Let's consider the ECWA for a moment. All three of you attended the Super 8 this year. To some people, that is the WrestleMania of the independents. How did it







The people who run the new Philadelphia-based Ring of Honor promotion seem to taking an intelligent approach. They plan to run monthly shows in a relatively small venue using wrestlers, such as the Spanish Announce Team, who are athletic, hungry, and innovative. They have a good understanding of their niche and their fan base.

compare to an average WWF show?

**MANKIEWICZ:** This year's Super 8 proved that, at its best, independent wrestling can be every bit as entertaining as the WWF. If, by some miracle, the Super 8 ran against *Smackdown* on a Thursday night—and you threw in the obligatory number of outside limos, backstage vignettes, and boob jobs—the quality of wrestling would rival a lot of what you see in the WWF and probably attract a lot of fans.

**SAKS:** But could a promotion like the ECWA do that every week?

**LENKER:** I don't know. Maybe if Mr. Ooh La La made it to the top tier.

**SAKS:** I won't hold my breath. What effect has the WWF developmental system had on independent wrestling? OVW and the HWA are gaining in stature. Overall, is this good or bad? Brandi?

**MANKIEWICZ:** I think it's good. It separates the wheat from the chaff, so to speak. Think back to a few years ago. Imagine being some bot-

tom feeder in Southeastern Wyoming Championship Wrestling and think of how far a leap it was to the WWF, WCW, or ECW. Now, at least there's a structure to it. Today, a rookie will aim for OVW or the HWA, and then WWF dark matches, and then shoot for the big time. And that rookie, if he makes it to a developmental territory, will get proper training and really be prepared for the WWF.

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**"The next breakout indy will combine the media resources of a promotion like the XWF or the WWA, but, instead of feeding everybody the same old stuff, it will have a radically different philosophy—and that will probably come from the grassroots indies. Somehow, somewhere down the line, some promoter is going to have \$30-million and an original idea."** —Brandi Mankiewicz

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**SAKS:** Where do the XWF and WWA fit into the structure?

**LENKER:** They strike me as traveling road shows that will occasionally pluck talent from the indies. But I think they'll concentrate on former WWF or WCW stars instead of grooming their own. I don't consider them indy promotions in the traditional sense.

**MANKIEWICZ:** Stu, you were asking about the next ECW or Smoky Mountain. The next breakout indy will combine the media resources of a promotion like the XWF or the WWA, but, instead of feeding everybody the same old stuff, it will have a radically different philosophy—and that will probably come from the grassroots indies. Imagine the XWF adopting XPW's approach instead of copying the WWF. Or the WWA patterning itself after Pro Wrestling NOAH, in terms of its stiff wrestling style. Somehow, somewhere down the line, some promoter is going to have \$30-million and an original idea. It's got to happen sometime. □



## TRISH STRATUS

HEIGHT: 5'4"

WEIGHT: 115

HOMETOWN: Toronto, Ontario

GREATEST MOMENT TO DATE:

With Lita, Jazz, Mighty Molly, Jacquelyn, and Ivory—all more experienced wrestlers than Trish—also in the six-way match for the vacant WWF women's title at last year's Survivor Series, who would have expected her to triumph? Stratus might have been the only person who thought she had a great chance to win

**SHE DOES IT SO WELL:** Pushes herself to keep learning and keep improving. Last summer, she was regarded as just a marginally better wrestler than Stacy Keibler and Torrie Wilson. Now she's having very good matches with Jazz. What happened? Hard work and a desire to get better have made all the difference in Trish's wrestling career. She deserves a ton of credit

**WHERE SHE NEEDS TO IMPROVE:**

If she keeps working hard on all facets of her game, she could be the WWF's most valuable female within a year

**PET FINISHER:** Bulldog

**BIGGEST TEST TO DATE:** Getting past her sordid affair with Vince McMahon—the barking, the spanking, the stripping—was a challenge, but she moved on admirably and confidently and is now taken seriously as a wrestler

**OUTLOOK FOR 2002:** She's had the beauty, the sex appeal, and the personality to make it big since she arrived in the WWF. Now she has the wrestling skill to complement all that. This should be a big year for Stratus. And 2003 could be even bigger!

**QUICKIE EXPERT ANALYSIS:** "I admire what Trish has done. Anybody can say they want to be known as more than just a pretty face, but she's made people notice her for her matches. I'd really welcome the chance to wrestle her one-on-one again. It'd be a great challenge."  
—Lita





## DONOVAN MORGAN

**HEIGHT:** 6'  
**WEIGHT:** 210  
**HOMETOWN:** San Francisco, CA  
**GREATEST MOMENT TO DATE:** He actually has two—the day he was signed by Pro Wrestling NOAH (summer 2001), and the night he won the sixth annual Super 8 tournament (March 2, 2002)  
**HE DOES IT SO WELL:** Blends the basic American wrestling style with hard-hitting, high-impact Japanese-style finishers  
**WHERE HE NEEDS TO IMPROVE:** He must find a way to establish himself as the dominant American wrestler on the Pro Wrestling NOAH roster. Winning a title in that promotion would be the perfect first step; he just has to do something to make himself stand out  
**PET FINISHER:** The sayonara (a chicken wing piledriver)  
**BIGGEST TEST TO DATE:** Less than one year ago (July 2001), he was invited to Japan for the first time by Pro Wrestling NOAH and given a match for the GHC junior heavyweight title in front of 17,000 fans at historic Budokan Hall. Although he didn't win the title, his performance was outstanding and appreciated by the Japanese faithful  
**OUTLOOK FOR 2002:** Look for him and Mike Modest to focus on winning the GHC tag team championship in Pro Wrestling NOAH, but he could also earn another shot at the junior heavyweight belt  
**QUICKIE EXPERT ANALYSIS:** "Donovan Morgan was a fairly well-kept secret in the independents in North America. It's great that he's finally getting a chance to shine in Japan—and he's doing it in front of some of the sport's most discriminating fans."

—Mike Modest





# wrestling timeline



## **JANUARY 17:**

The Mountie (Jacques Rougeau) upsets Bret Hart for the WWF Intercontinental title in Springfield, Massachusetts, beginning a reign that lasts all of two days before it is ended by Roddy Piper.

## **JANUARY 19:**

Ric Flair turns in one of the most impressive Royal Rumble performances in the history of the event, outlasting 29 other WWF wrestlers to win the battle royal and thus capture the vacant WWF World heavyweight title.

## **JANUARY 29:**

The Undertaker turns good for the first time in his WWF career when he saves Elizabeth from a potentially brutal chair attack by Jake Roberts in a dressing room.

## **JANUARY 5:**

The Nasty Boys—Brian Knobs and Jerry Sags—are involved in a scary incident in Peoria, Illinois, as they get into a fight with several men who threw a rock at their car. Knobs is stabbed four times (three times in the arm, once in the stomach), while Sags suffers a concussion after being hit in the head by jumper cables. Both are treated at a hospital and released.

## **JANUARY 18:**

Crush (Brian Adams) defeats Ron Harris for the Pacific Northwest heavyweight title in a best-of-three-falls match. After submitting to a leglock in the second fall, Ron limps back to the dressing room and secretly sends his identical twin, Don, to the ring in his place. After smashing Crush with brass knuckles, Don gets the pin—for Ron.

## **JANUARY 20:**

Dino Bravo defeats The Barbarian at the Forum in Montreal in his last match before retiring.





# 1992

*In each issue, Inside Wrestling will journey back in time to look at how the major events of one particular year rocked the wrestling world*

## **FEBRUARY 1:**

Ronnie Garvin defeats Puerto Rican legend Carlos Colon for the WWC Universal title.

## **FEBRUARY 8:**

Kerry Von Erich is arrested in Richardson, Texas, for attempting to falsify two drug prescriptions. His father, Fritz, announces shortly after his son is released on \$6,000 bond that Kerry will be entering a drug rehabilitation program.

## **FEBRUARY 29:**

Sting defeats his old pal Lex Luger for the WCW World heavyweight title in the main event of SuperBrawl II.

## **FEBRUARY 7:**

Barry Horowitz, one of the most famous preliminary wrestlers of his era, upsets Jerry Lynn for the GWF light heavyweight title in Dallas.

## **FEBRUARY 19:**

Long-time wrestler/manager Tojo Yamamoto is found dead in his apartment in Tennessee. His death is ruled a suicide. Yamamoto, 65, was said to have been despondent over his failing health.

## **MARCH 10:**

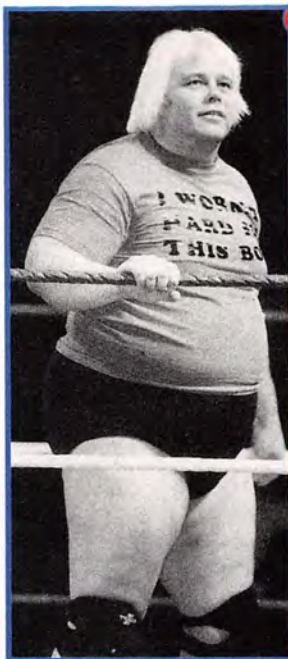
Jerry Lawler gets an unlikely and unusual partner, the chainsaw-toting, mask-wearing maniac Leatherface, in a USWA tag team title match against the champion Moondogs. Although they put up a good fight, "The King" and Leatherface lose.





## MARCH 25:

Former heavyweight boxing champion Leon Spinks defeats Tarzan Goto for the WWA World martial arts title in Tokyo.



## APRIL 4:

Portly Buddy Rose, who claimed to weigh 230 pounds when he was actually closer to 400 at the time, vomits after losing a stipulation match to Bart Sawyer in Pacific Northwest Wrestling in Portland. Rose had vowed to eat a can of spinach if he lost, which he did. The vomiting starts when Sawyer reveals to Rose that he and some of his friends spit in the can of spinach prior to the match.

## APRIL 7:

Roddy Piper brings his "Piper's Pit" back to WWF TV. Much to the delight of the crowd in Toledo, Ohio, he calls his initial guest, The Brooklyn Brawler, a bum and blasts him with the ring bell after Brawler berates him for losing the Intercontinental title at WrestleMania two days earlier.

## MARCH 13:

Eleven days after high-ranking WWF officials Pat Patterson and Terry Garvin resign on the heels of sexual misconduct allegations leveled by wrestler Barry Orton and two former ring attendants, Vince McMahon appears on CNN's *Larry King Live* to address the allegations ("a bunch of bunk," he calls them) and those of steroid abuse in his company.

## APRIL 1:

Former WWF wrestler Paul Roma scores his first victory as a pro boxer, a 47-second TKO over Norman Fontini in Randolph, Massachusetts.

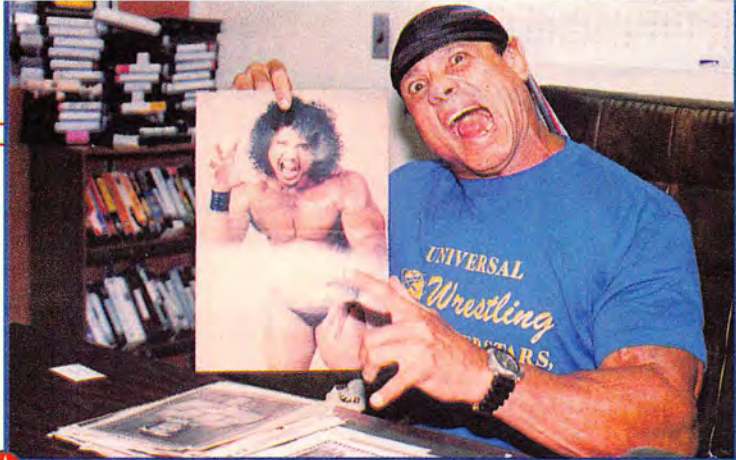
## APRIL 5:

Randy Savage wins his second WWF World title by defeating arch-rival Ric Flair at WrestleMania VIII in Indianapolis. The card ends on a rather flat note, though, as Hulk Hogan defeats Sid Justice (Vicious), but only by disqualification when manager Harvey Whippleman interferes.





# 1992



## APRIL 25:

Jimmy "Superfly" Snuka is crowned the first heavyweight champion in ECW's history after he defeats Wildman Bellomo in Philadelphia. Earlier, Snuka and Bellomo won separate battle royals to advance to a match to determine the first champion.

## MAY 4:

Brian Christopher becomes a dual USWA champion for the second time in his career when he beats Tom Prichard for the Southern title in Memphis. He was already the USWA Texas champion.

## MAY 22:

Brian Lee becomes the first-ever champion of Jim Cornette's Smoky Mountain Wrestling when he beats Paul Orndorff by disqualification in a tournament final. Because Lee lost so much blood in a semifinal match with Tony Anthony, he was deemed unfit to wrestle another bout. But as Orndorff was being presented with the belt, Lee began brawling with him. Commissioner Bob Armstrong ultimately disqualified Orndorff for hitting Lee with brass knuckles.

## APRIL 29:

Papa Shango (now known as The Godfather) appears to put some sort of bizarre voodoo curse on The Ultimate Warrior after gaining possession of one of his wristbands at a WWF TV taping.

## MAY 7:

Sabu and Horace Boulder defeat Mr. Onita and Tarzan Goto for the Frontier Martial Arts tag team title in a bloody barbed-wire match in Toyota, Japan.

## MAY 30:

Don Owen relinquishes control of Pacific Northwest Wrestling and says goodbye to the fans after 68 years in the wrestling promoting business.

## JUNE 16:

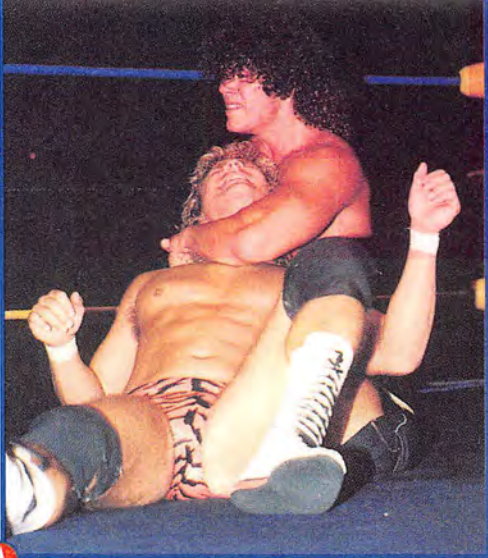
Four days after suffering two strokes, former NWA and WWF world champion Buddy Rogers dies in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, at the age of 71.



INSIDE WRESTLING







### **JUNE 20:**

Scotty Flamingo (now known as Raven) defeats Brian Pillman to win the WCW light heavyweight title. He would lose the championship to Brad Armstrong 15 days later. The title would end up being abandoned after Armstrong was stripped and a tentatively scheduled tournament never took place.

### **JUNE 30:**

Stan "Plowboy" Frazier, known to WWF fans as Uncle Elmer, dies of diabetes at the age of 54 at his home near Biloxi, Mississippi.

### **JULY 16:**

Former NWA junior heavyweight champion "Dangerous" Danny McShane dies of pneumonia in Alvin, Texas, at the age of 79.

### **JUNE 25:**

The legendary Sheik defeats Mr. Onita in a no-ropes, barbed-wire match to capture the Frontier Martial Arts heavyweight title in Sapporo, Japan.

### **JULY 2:**

Bob Backlund wrestles in the WWF for the first time since 1984 and defeats Skinner.

### **AUGUST 2:**

Ron Simmons (a.k.a. Faarooq) becomes the first black world champion in wrestling history by defeating Big Van Vader for the WCW title in a major upset. Simmons had little time to prepare for the match, as he didn't find out he'd be getting the title shot until that night. The names of many potential challengers were placed in a hat, and Simmons' was chosen at random.





# 1992



## **AUGUST 12:**

Johnny Hot Body becomes the first-ever ECW TV champion by defeating Larry Winters in Philadelphia.

## **AUGUST 18:**

The unlikely team of Shane Douglas and Rick Steamboat captures the WCW World tag team title by defeating Dustin Rhodes and Barry Windham in Macon, Georgia.

## **AUGUST 29:**

More than 80,000 fans pack London's Wembley Stadium to watch SummerSlam. The main event sees England's own Davey Boy Smith pin brother-in-law Bret Hart to win the Intercontinental title. The two men, who had several disagreements in the weeks leading up to their match, embrace afterward.

## **AUGUST 16:**

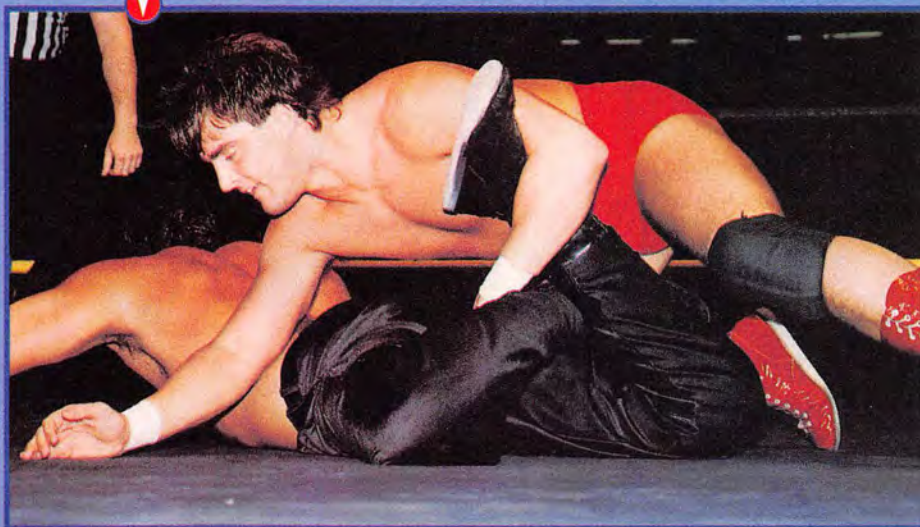
The Great Muta (Keiji Muto) wins the first IWGP heavyweight championship of his career by defeating Riki Choshu in Fukuoka, Japan.

## **AUGUST 28:**

Erik Watts, son of WCW Executive Vice President Bill Watts, makes his pro debut in Knoxville, Tennessee, defeating Sgt. Buddy Lee Parker.

## **SEPTEMBER 2:**

WCW's Clash of the Champions XX celebrates 20 years of wrestling on TBS. It also marks the final U.S. appearance of Andre the Giant.





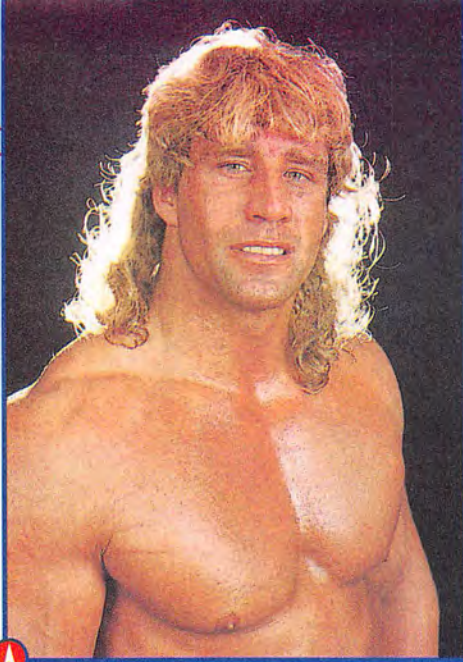
**SEPTEMBER 23:**

Rick Steiner goes on the shelf for three months when he tears his right pectoral muscle during a tag team match pitting him and brother Scott against Hiroshi Hase and Kensuke Sasaki in Yokohama, Japan.



**OCTOBER 1:**

Kerry Von Erich is sentenced on six felony counts of prescription forgery. He receives a 10-year suspended sentence, 10 years of supervised probation, and a \$6,000 fine.



**OCTOBER 13:**

Ted DiBiase and Irwin R. Schyster—collectively known as Money Inc.—win their second WWF World tag team title of the year by defeating Earthquake and Typhoon in Regina, Saskatchewan.

**SEPTEMBER 29:**

Scott Steiner defeats Rick Steamboat in Columbus, Georgia, to win the WCW TV title.



**OCTOBER 12:**

Bret Hart wins the first of his five WWF World heavyweight titles by defeating Ric Flair in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.



**OCTOBER 27:**

Big Van Vader breaks the back of WCW preliminary wrestler Joe Thurman with a power bomb in Augusta, Georgia.





## OCTOBER 27:

Shawn Michaels defeats Davey Boy Smith for the Intercontinental title. Shortly thereafter, Smith leaves the WWF.

## NOVEMBER 16:

Using a surfer gimmick that was radically different from the hardcore persona he would cultivate several years later, The Sandman wins his first ECW heavyweight title by defeating Don Muraco in Philadelphia.

## DECEMBER 14:

Rick and Scott Steiner make their WWF debut and beat Rock Warner and Scott Colton at a TV taping in Green Bay, Wisconsin.

## OCTOBER 30:

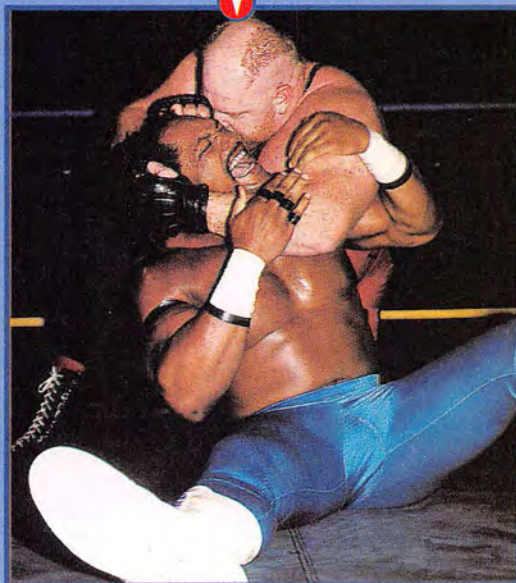
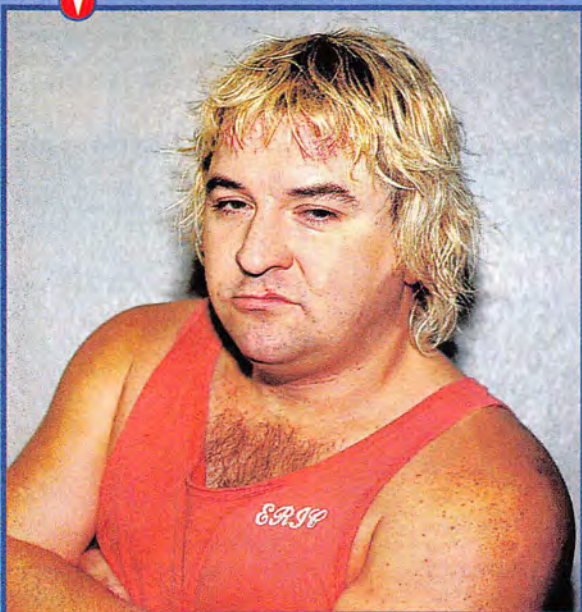
Eric Embry suffers a badly bruised liver and severe ligament and cartilage damage in his left knee when his car is run off the road in Beaver Dam, Kentucky.

## NOVEMBER 25:

WWF World champion Bret Hart defeats Intercontinental champion Shawn Michaels by submission to the sharpshooter in the main event of Survivor Series. Of course the significance of this Survivor Series showdown between the two would pale in comparison to that of their match at the same PPV five years later.

## DECEMBER 30:

Big Van Vader ends the WCW World title reign of Ron Simmons almost five months to the day after Simmons beat him for the belt in the very same city, Baltimore.





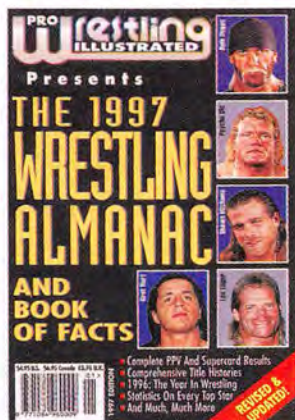
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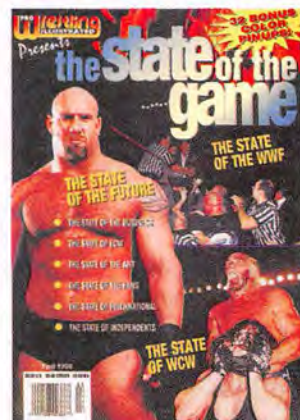
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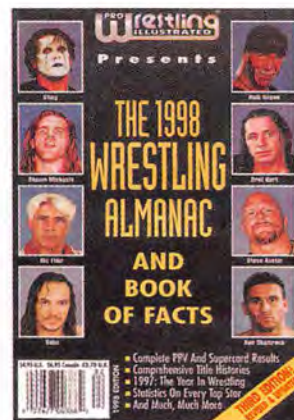
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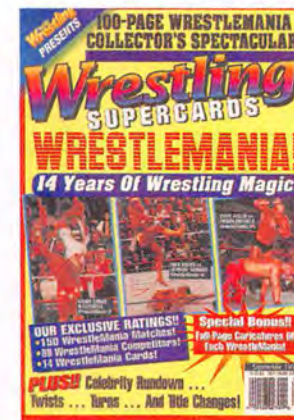
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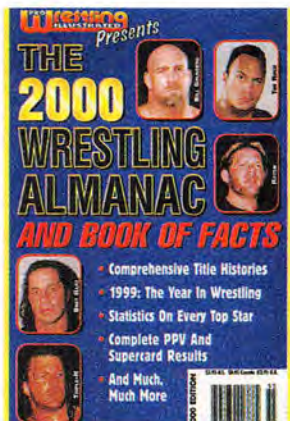


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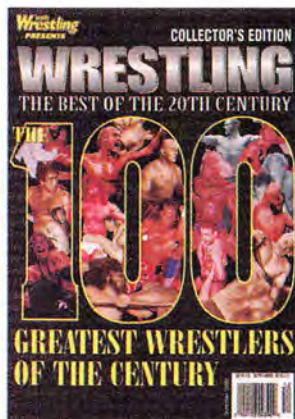
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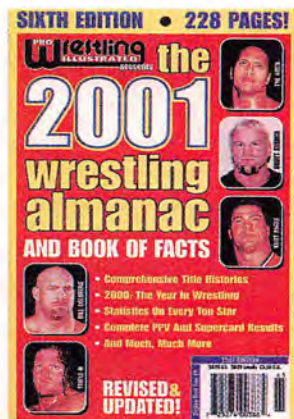
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## SHOW MUST GO ON

I couldn't agree more with what Frank Krewda wrote about The Big Show in his "Behind The Dressing Room Door" column (June 2002). Something is wrong when a 7'2", 500-pound guy who won world titles in both the WWF and WCW is nothing more than a bit player who loses a lot more than he wins. Like Frank, I think The Big Show and the WWF are both to blame. I'm just not sure which is *more* to blame. I really have no brilliant suggestions on how to make Big Show a big, big star again, but if nothing else, he could always go back to doing impressions of Hulk Hogan, Rikishi, and the like. He was very entertaining when he was doing those.

TRENT BEDIAS  
 Peru, VT

## SPIRIT'S WILLING ...

I had a hard time getting into the WWA Revolution pay-per-view in February, but there was one match on the show that I won't soon forget. It was the Devon Storm vs. Sabu match. It wasn't a classic. I surely won't try to tell you it was. I'll remember it because it was sad watching Sabu. His body has taken so much punishment over the years, and you

can tell. He was really trying in that match, but how much can you expect from a man who has gone through probably hundreds of tables in the last 10 years?

I give Sabu a lot of credit for making the extreme/hardcore style popular in the U.S. He did a lot for wrestling, but I'm sure his body is making him pay for it now. I hope he's able to have a somewhat normal life once he retires, which for his sake probably should be soon.

JON LUDDEN  
 Quincy, CA

## GOOD POINT, CITIZEN!

I'd like to write on behalf of all the Hurricane Helms fans out there and let it be known that I think Hurricane needs to get on TV a lot more than he's been on since the Alliance was destroyed at Survivor Series. Hurricane Helms was one of the Alliance's most entertaining superstars, and I thought he had a nice little following when he was brought back to TV later. All I can say about Helms getting buried on *Jakked* and *Metal* and *Sunday Night Heat* all the time is "Whatsupwiddat?!"

DAVID ORTEGA  
 Willow Grove, PA



Sabu has taken so much punishment over the last decade that his body has to be in pretty rough shape by now. Jon Ludden appreciates all he has done for wrestling.



# This Month In...

## PRO Wrestling ILLUSTRATED

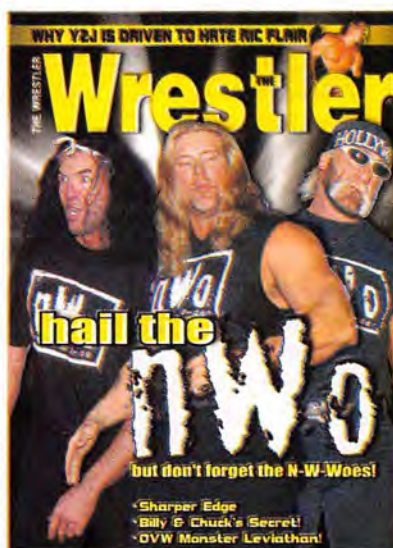


Ever suffered from a **STEPH** infection? Probably not, but **TRIPLE-H** has one right now—a **STEPHANIE McMAHON-HELMESLEY** infection! Will he ever be able to focus us on his career as long as she's a threat to him? And is it his fault she is the witch she is? ... How long will the **NWO** last this time? Will there be new members? What about **ERIC BISCHOFF**? We'll delve into these issues and others as we tackle your **NWO FAQ**! ... **GOLDUST** hasn't made the impact he hoped he'd make when he returned to the WWF. Not yet anyway. Does he need "**MARLENA**"?

All this—and much more—in the July 2002 issue of *Pro Wrestling Illustrated*

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## THE Wrestler



The **NWO** was a phenomenon that rocked the wrestling world in 1996. It was the hottest thing going. But the NWO had its share of forgettable moments, too. We look back at the group's good, bad, and ugly history in a special 14-page section! ... You know **CHRIS JERICHO** hates **THE ROCK**. You know he despises **TRIPLE-H**. You know he loathes **STEVE AUSTIN**. But do you know how much he abhors **RIC FLAIR**—or why? ... **WILLIAM REGAL** has gotten the best of **EDGE** in their feud, but believe it or not, it was the best thing that ever happened to the Canadian star. We'll tell you why!

All this—and much more—in the July 2002 issue of *The Wrestler*

**NOW ON SALE!**



shaved any extra hair, I'd better understand which side of his body was which without having to look downward for nipples.

Take my word for it: What he has going on is just one big, furry mess that never seems to get addressed directly in any polite conversation, but still somehow finds a way to silently dominate the dialogue. In other words, you can't talk to this guy without staring at it. By the end of a short chat, you just about want to hold him down and grab some wax. At least I know I wanted to. I secretly tried to pay a few of the other wrestlers to do just that, but they declined while agreeing with me that something had to be done. I guess Matt Stryker I's reputation for being a formidable opponent has spread beyond the boundaries of the Heartland Wrestling Association.

Speaking of fur, Matt Stryker II has quite a striking hairy patch that covers his body. It's just another overgrown mess. He's not exactly in Miguel Perez Jr.'s league, but he definitely doesn't need a sweater on slightly chilly days. I know some women find that appealing, but those are also the type who watch Ron Jeremy's movies for the acting. Granted, it was better groomed at the Super 8 compared to its usual wookie standards, but there were still follicles untouched by razor on his chest. And that's icky. Unfortunately, the thick

silver chain that he sometimes wears around his neck seems fitting ... if you think of it as a choker collar for a puppy.

While the potential uses of that chain are intriguing, it's still not enough to classify him as stud material in my book as long as his well-defined torso is naturally covered. He does have potential to be cute, I guess, but seeing the field of fur gently swaying in the breeze is enough to make my stomach turn.

There are some ironies in this situation, like this one: Stryker I has no chest hair. Now, given the amount of face fuzz on the man, one would think that his body would

follow the same forested pattern. I'm sure he shaves it off, like most of the rest of those in the wrestling world, yet I wonder why he never *once* thought to lift that razor higher than his chin. Coincidentally, Stryker II shaves his face and sometimes grooms the edges of his chest jungle, but he never plows the whole thing down.

Oh, getting back to Noah, Pro Wrestling NOAH's Donovan Morgan won the Super 8 tournament. He won a hard-fought final battle against A.J. Styles to take this year's honor. I guess I should have written this column about that, but I just had a few other things to get off my chest. □



There are always interesting things to see at the Super 8 that aren't necessarily part of the tournament. Back in 2000, it was two aquatic athletes, Mark "The Shark" Shrader and Shark Boy. This year, there was a more furry duo with which to contend.



and threw down the NWA belt, claiming he didn't want to win it under those crooked circumstances.

"Those in attendance felt cheated," said Koichi Yoshizawa, our correspondent in the Far East. "No NWA champion has had the audacity to cheat like this in Japan, not Lou Thesz, not Dory Funk Jr., and not even Ric Flair. But in this case, Dan Severn did not cheat. It was worse than that. The NWA president cheated. When the WWF came to Japan recently, our fans did not mind that kind of controversy because it was an understood part of the show. They hold the NWA to a different standard. For an NWA title match to end in such controversy, not to mention last only 10 minutes, it was a disappointment."

Those are strong words from Koichi because he loves anything American. Yet Koichi's opinion indicates a serious image problem this fiasco could create. And chief referee Richards didn't help matters by complaining to Japanese reporters. "President Miller threatened to fire me, cancel my return flight home, and leave me stranded here in Japan," he alleged. "I didn't have any choice but to go along with it."

But he did have a choice. Not only is Richards an independent official, he is also a member of the NWA Board of Directors. This is different from a Vince McMahon-Earl Hebner relationship. Richards answers to a greater authority than just President Miller; he answers to the entire Board. Surely no unbiased observer would rule against Richards if he refused to participate in Miller's scheme.

Unless ... the NWA Board supported Miller's actions. Were Board members insulted that Shinya Hashimoto, like Naoya Ogawa, had taken the title to Japan?

If that's the case, Miller is primarily responsible. Immediately after Miller—as promoter of NWA East—narrowly beat out Wildside promoter Bill Behrens to be elected president of wrestling's oldest governing body last October, he made one of the most controversial decisions ever. It happened at the 53rd anniversary show, when Hashimoto savaged then-NWA champ Steve Corino until he was deemed unfit to continue. Richards, who refereed that match as well, insisted the NWA championship could change hands only via pinfall or submission and correctly returned the belt to Corino. Miller, instead of adhering to an established policy, declared the title vacant.

That led to the three-way match for the championship on December 15 in McKeesport, Pennsylvania. Aside from the fact that the NWA title shouldn't be defended in



NWA President Jim Miller scolded NWA referee Fred Richards for what Miller considered a slow count during the Hashimoto-Severn match (above). Just minutes later, Richards accelerated his counting which began Severn's current NWA heavyweight title reign (below).



three-way bouts, Hashimoto might not have won the belt without Steele as a third participant.

A lot of people have disappointed me. Richards was too easily coerced. As far as I know, Severn hasn't officially relinquished the NWA championship, despite his dramatic display in Tokyo. If it weren't for Miller, though, none of this would have happened. I would demand his impeachment, but I fear the ensuing scandal might implicate more members of the NWA Board. It could mean the NWA's death.

I realize most NWA presidents have been common promoters. But I don't think any of them—Pat O'Connor, Fritz Von Erich, Jim Crockett Jr., or even Howard Brody—would have stooped this low.

I heard Bob Geigel is a security guard somewhere near Kansas City. Wouldn't he like an office job again?

*(Liz Hunter can be reached via e-mail at SuperstarLizH@yahoo.com.)* □





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**February 1991: WrestleMania VII Contest.** Centerfold: 1991 calendar. Plus: Sid Vicious, DiBiase-Rhodes, Scott Steiner, Power & Glory, Terry Funk.

**April 1991: Sgt. Slaughter Guilty Of Treason!** Centerfold: Tom Zenk. Plus: Sting, Magnum T.A., Jesse Ventura, Lawler-Gilbert, Hogan & Warrior.

**June 1991: Hulk Hogan: America's Hero.** Centerfold: Hacksaw Duggan. Plus: Cactus Jack, Ric Flair, Nasty Boys, Steiners, Simmons-Reed.

**July 1991: The War Is Over! Hulk Hogan Liberates The WWF Belt From Sgt. Slaughter!** Centerfold: Brian Pillman. Plus: Horsemen, Lex Luger, Eric Embry, Demolition.

**August 1991 (Special Issue): Supercards '91.** Centerfold: Hulk Hogan. Plus: WrestleMania VII, WCW-New Japan, Ultimate Warrior, Owen Hart, Koloff-Luger.

**October 1991: Sid Justice: The Second Coming Of Hulk Hogan.** Centerfold: Lex Luger. Plus: Hogan-Slaughter, Terrence Taylor, Barry Windham, Williams-Bigelow.

**November 1991: Your Wedding Gift For Savage & Elizabeth: Help Lift The "Macho Man's" Suspension!** Centerfold: Bobby Eaton. Plus: Tito Santana, Bushwhackers, Jushin Liger, Brian Pillman.

**February 1992: Has Hulk Hogan Had Enough?** Centerfold: 1992 calendar. Plus: Sting, Justice-Roberts, hot prospects, Eddie Gilbert.

**May 1992: Revitalized In Tokyo: Hulk Hogan Is Super-Psyched For WrestleMania VII!** Centerfold: Rick Rude. Plus: Sting & Muta-Steiners, Jarrett & Fuller, Lightning Kid, Randy Savage, intimidation.

**June 1992: Exclusive PWI Interview: Roddy Piper Speaks Out!** Centerfold: Dustin Rhodes. Plus: Dangerously-Sting, Abdullah-Cactus, Sid Justice, Randy Savage.

**July 1992: The Best Of The Best—The Masters Of Their Craft.** Centerfold: Randy Savage. Plus: Liger-Pillman, Jim Neidhart, U.S.-Japan, Ric Flair.

**September 1992: Savage vs. Sting: Why It Isn't That Unlikely.** Centerfold: Nikita Koloff. Plus: Steiners, Barry Windham, Sid Justice, Hodge & Weston, Shawn Michaels.

**October 1992: The Hatred Still Runs Deep: Ultimate Warrior vs. Randy Savage—They'll Settle Up At SummerSlam!** Centerfold: Cactus Jack. Plus: Steve Williams, Tom Zenk, WWF title controversy, fire match, Eric Embry.

**November 1992: The British Bulldog: Hounding The Hitman.** Centerfold: Ultimate Warrior. Plus: Honky Tonk Man, Steiners, Undertaker, Madusa, perfect wrestler.

**February 1993: No One Can Cut Down Razor Ramon.** Centerfold: Curt Hennig. Plus: Jake Roberts, Pillman-Dustin, Ric Flair-Road Warriors, Rick Rude, Snuka-Muraco.

**May 1993: WrestleMania Without Hulk Hogan?** Centerfold: The Undertaker. Plus: Ron Simmons, Cactus Jack, Madusa-Sherri, WCW-New Japan, Ultimate Warrior.

**April 1996: WCW World Title Turmoil.** Centerfold: The Kid. Plus: Hulk Hogan, Ahmed Johnson, Bob Armstrong, Michaels-Bret, Public Enemy.

**May 1996: Un-Natural! The WWF Has Finally Gone Too Far!** Centerfold: Public Enemy. Plus: Jeff Jarrett, Dreamer-Raven, Dan Severn, Ric Flair, Giant.

**August 1996: Shawn Michaels: Finally—A World Champion.** Centerfold: Sunny. Plus: 1-2-3 Kid, Sting-Flair, Sandman-Missy, Steve Austin, Jimmy Hart, WrestleMania XII.

**October 1996: Peaking Too Soon: Will The Giant Be Ruined By His Own Success?** Centerfold: Goldust. Plus: Big Van Vader, Ric Flair, Bulldog, Lex Luger.

**Winter 1996 (Special Issue): PWI 500.** Centerfold: Shawn Michaels.

**February 1997: Mr. Perfect: "Shawn Michaels Stole My Life."** Centerfold: "Psycho" Sid. Plus: Kroffat & Furnas, Vince McMahon, Randy Savage, New Razor & New Diesel.

**May 1997: March Madness—Bret vs. Shawn.** Centerfold: Chris Benoit & Woman. Plus: Goldust, Giant, Akira Hokuto, Roddy Piper.

**August 1997 (Special Issue): Supercards '97.** Centerfold: NWO. Plus: WrestleMania XIII, Uncensored III, Barely Legal, Public Enemy, Kimberly.

**Holiday 1997: PWI 500.** Centerfold: Dean Malenko.

**February 1998: Sting vs. Hogan—The Match Of The Century!** Centerfold: Hogan vs. Sting fight poster. Plus: 16-page Starrcade preview, Perry Saturn, Dude Love.

**May 1998: Starrcade Scandal! We Hate To Say It ... But Give The Belt Back To Hogan.** Centerfold: Ric Flair. Plus: Mero & Sable, Taz, Taka Michinoku.

**June 1998 (Special Issue): The 1998 PWI Poll.** Centerfold: Steve Austin. Plus: Sabu, Lex Luger, Sting, Rocky Maivia, Bill Goldberg.



**July 1998: WWF vs. WCW: Which Is Better?** Centerfold: Rocky Maivia. Plus: Benoit, Bill Goldberg, Ahmed Johnson.

**October 1998: Bret Screws Bret, Part II.** Centerfold: Hunter Hearst Helmsley. Plus: Jim Ross, Marcus Bagwell, WWF controversy, FBI.

**November 1998: Vince Mc(Mad)Man! He Crossed The Bottom Line ... Now He'll Pay!** Centerfold: Kevin Nash. Plus: Sting, Bret Hart, Taz-Douglas, New Age Outlaws.

**December 1998: Gold Rush! Get Ready For The Most Awesome WCW Title Reign Ever!** Centerfold: Undertaker. Plus: The Giant, Vader, Guerreros, Ken Shamrock.

**Holiday 1998 (100-Page Special Issue): PWI 500.** Eighth Annual Special.

**January 1999: No Evil! Can Today's Fans Accept The Warrior's Creed?** Centerfold: Chyna. Plus: Sting, Bill Goldberg, Summerslam.

**March 1999 (100-Page Special Issue): 1998—The Year In Wrestling.** 1998 In Review, Achievement '98 awards, Unofficial/Official awards, Predictions for 1999.

**April 1999: The Crock! The Title Change That Screwed The World!** Centerfold: Chris Jericho. Plus: Bill Goldberg, Tommy Dreamer, Booker T, more Unofficial/Officials.

**May 1999: Who Holds The Key To WrestleMania XV?** Centerfold: Konnan. Plus: Mark Henry, Sting-Nash, Bill Alfonso, Brian Hildebrand.

**June 1999: (100-Page Special Issue): The 1999 PWI Poll.** Plus: Mankind, Flair & Turner, VMac, Steiners, New Japan-UFO.

**July 1999: Warning! This Team Will Self-Destruct In 15 Seconds!** Centerfold: X-Pac. Plus: New Jack-Dudleys, Jesse James, Venis & Godfather, Sting-Bischoff-Flair.

**August 1999: (100-Page Special Issue): Supercards '99: WWF WrestleMania, WCW Uncensored, ECW Living Dangerously.** Plus: Super 8, Bam Bam Bigelow, Jerry Lawler, tag team wrestling.

**September 1999: Why Stone-Cold Might Get Out While He's Still On Top!** Centerfold: Sting. Plus: Kidman & Misterio, The Rock, Bret Hart, Taz-Sabu.

**October 1999: Why The World Must Fear Scott Steiner, By Buff Bagwell.** Centerfold: Mankind. Plus: Kane & X-Pac, The Godfather, Perry Saturn, 20th anniversary readers' poll.

**November 1999: The Women Of The WWF: There's More To Their Power Than Their Looks.** Centerfold: Owen Hart. Plus: Rey Misterio Jr., Roddy Piper, Steiners, Steve Austin.

**December 1999: Steve Austin: "CEO This! I'm The Damn Champ!"** Centerfold: Rey Misterio Jr. Plus: Randy Savage, Jimmy Hart, WCW youth, Billy Gunn.

**Holiday 1999 (100-Page Special Issue): PWI 500.** Ninth Annual Special.

**January 2000: The Millennium Man Mouths Off! An Unforgettable Hour With Chris Jericho!** Centerfold: Taz. Plus: Chris Benoit, Sid-Goldberg, Triple-H.

**February 2000: The Master Manipulator! How Stone-Cold Controls The WWF.** Centerfold: Kane. Plus: Paul Heyman, Hogan-Bret-Sting-Luger.

**March 2000 (100-Page Special Issue): 1999—The Year In Wrestling.** 1999 In Review, Achievement '99 awards, Unofficial/Official awards, Predictions for 2000.

**April 2000: Stone-Cold vs. The Rock: Let's Settle It At WrestleMania!** Centerfold: Chris Benoit. Plus: Dallas Page, Goldberg-Vicious, more Unofficial awards.

**May 2000 (100-Page Special Issue): The Y2K PWI Poll.** Plus: Mitsuharu Misawa, Triple-H, Bret Hart, Hollys, Chyna & Aysa, ECW returnees.

**June 2000: Just Wondering, Steph ... Is Triple-H Worth Your Billion-Dollar Inheritance?** Centerfold: The Rock. Plus: Heyman-Van Dam, Vader, NWO.

**July 2000: Call It A Wrap, Jack! You've Done Your Share ... Go Home!** Centerfold: Sid Vicious. Plus: Dusty Rhodes, Disco Inferno, DDP, Dudleys-Hardys.

**August 2000 (100-Page Special Issue): Supercards 2000: WWF WrestleMania, WCW Uncensored, ECW Living Dangerously.** Plus: Rob Van Dam, greatest supercards, Super 8.

**September 2000: WrestleMcMania! Why The Peace Can't Last.** Centerfold: Jeff Jarrett. Plus: Eric Bischoff, Dudleys, Raven.

**October 2000: Scott Steiner: The Superstars The WWF Let Slip Away.** Centerfold: Rikishi. Plus: Shawn Michaels, Austin-Rock, Rhino-RVD.

**November 2000: The Rock vs. Triple-H. Our Special 50-Category Analysis.** Pinups: Extreme wrestling. Plus: Nash-Steiner-Hall, Hardcore Holly, wrestling too extreme?

**December 2000: Head Hog! Does Undertaker Have Enough Gas In His Tank To Rumble To The Top?** Centerfold: Dallas Page. Plus: Rick Angle, Rikishi, Vampiro-Sting, Japan.

**[FULL-COLOR BEGINNING WITH HOLIDAY 2000]**

**Holiday 2000 (116-Page Special): PWI 500.** Includes: The editors' views, a look back at 1991's top 25, Achievement 2000 ballot.

**January 2001: Who Does He Really Hate? Someone Will Pay For Austin's Paint!** Plus: Steven Richards, Justin Credible, Gordon Solie, Jeff Jarrett, Am-Sid.

**February 2001 (116-Page Special): The State Of The Game.** Includes: The states of the WWF, WCW, ECW, independents, international, the business, the art.

**March 2001: Hulk Hogan: WWF Fans Want Him Back!** Plus: Mike Awesome, Rikishi, Jerry Lynn, Elix Skipper, Triple-H.

**April 2001 (116-Page Special): 2000—The Year In Wrestling.** 2000 In Review, Achievement 2000 awards, Unofficial/Official awards, Predictions for 2001.

**May 2001: The WrestleMania Curse! Will The Great One Ever Win The Big One?** Plus: Vince McMahon, William Regal, Page & Nash, Ivory, Lance Storm, ECW.

**June 2001 (116-Page Special): The 2001 PWI Poll.** Plus: Ric Flair, Chyna, Steve Austin.

**July 2001: Women's Work! It Ain't What It Used To Be!** Plus: Dudleys, Chavo Guerrero Jr., Justin Credible, Francine, Scott Steiner.

**August 2001 (116-Page Special): Supercards 2001: WrestleMania X-Seven, WCW Night of Champions, Super 8.** Plus: Big Show, Kane, Jeff Jarrett, Tommy Dreamer.

**September 2001: WWF-WCW: The 10 Questions That Must Be Answered.** Plus: Triple-H, Stacy Keibler, Paul Heyman, Matt Hardy.

**October 2001 (116-Page Special): Mid-Year Report.** Top 50 stories, grades, half-year awards, predictions. Plus: Perry Saturn, Dallas Page, Terri.

**November 2001: A Crying Shame: He Paid The Price To Purchase WCW ... Is He Willing To Pay The Price To Keep It?** Plus: DDP-Kimberly, Edge, Molly-Spike, Tajiri, Rob Van Dam, Mick Foley, Florida indies.

**December 2001 (116-Page Special): PWI 500—Angle Climbs To The Top.** Includes: The editors' views, Achievement 2001 ballot.

**January 2002: There's Something About Lita—What Makes Her The WWF's "It" Girl.** Plus: Jericho-Stephanie, Mark Henry, X-Pac, Triple-H, Undertaker.

**February 2002 (116-Page Special): The State Of The Game.** Includes: The states of the WWF, independents, international, the business, the art. Plus: Goldberg.

**March 2002: No More Joking, No More Choking: Y2J Takes A Serious Stab At Superstardom!** Plus: Test, The Rock, Eric Bischoff, Bradshaw, Foley vs. Regal.

**April 2002 (116-Page Special): 2001—The Year In Wrestling.** 2001 In Review, Achievement 2001 awards, Unofficial/Official awards, Predictions for 2002.

**May 2002: The Mania To End All Manias! What Will Wrestling Look Like By WrestleMania X-9?** Plus: Trish Stratus, RVD, Russ Haas, Big Bossman, WWF comedy.

**June 2002 (116-Page Special): The 2002 PWI Poll.** Plus: Hulk Hogan, Ric Flair, Steve Austin.



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## TOP 15

- 1—**TRIPLE-H**  
(4) WWF World champion
- 2—**CHRIS JERICO**  
(1) No. 2 contender: WWF World title
- 3—**TOSHIAKI KAWADA**  
(-) All-Japan Triple Crown champion

- 4—**ROB VAN DAM**  
(10) WWF Intercontinental champion
- 5—**KURT ANGLE**  
(8) No. 3 contender: WWF World title
- 6—**TADAO YASUDA**  
(-) IWGP heavyweight champion
- 7—**THE ROCK**  
(7) No. 4 contender: WWF World title

- 8—**JUN AKIYAMA**  
(5) GHC heavyweight champion
- 9—**STEVE AUSTIN**  
(2) No. 5 contender: WWF World title
- 10—**WILLIAM REGAL**  
(6) WWF European champion
- 11—**KEIJI MUTO**  
(3) No. 1 contender: All-Japan Triple Crown

- 12—**THE UNDERTAKER**  
(14) No. 7 contender: WWF World title
- 13—**PROTOTYPE**  
(-) OVW heavyweight champion
- 14—**RACE STEELE**  
(-) HWA heavyweight champion
- 15—**DAN SEVERN**  
(-) NWA heavyweight champion

## WWF

- 1—**TRIPLE-H**  
(4) 253, Greenwich, CT
- 2—**ROB VAN DAM**  
(7) 237, Battle Creek, MI
- 3—**CHRIS JERICO**  
(1) 225, Winnipeg, Manitoba

- 4—**KURT ANGLE**  
(6) 233, Pittsburgh, PA
- 5—**THE ROCK**  
(5) 272, Miami, FL
- 6—**STEVE AUSTIN**  
(3) 252, Victoria, TX
- 7—**WILLIAM REGAL**  
(2) 257, Blackpool, England

- 8—**THE UNDERTAKER**  
(9) 304, Dallas, TX
- 9—**KANE**  
(12) 345, parts unknown
- 10—**EDGE**  
(8) 240, Toronto, Ontario
- 11—**HULK HOGAN**  
(-) 275, Venice Beach, CA

- 12—**SCOTT HALL**  
(-) 290, Miami, FL
- 13—**DALLAS PAGE**  
(11) 260, Point Pleasant, NJ
- 14—**BOOKER T**  
(10) 250, Houston, TX
- 15—**RAVEN**  
(-) 243, Short Hills, NJ

## OVW

- 1—**PROTOTYPE**  
(2) 260, Los Angeles, CA
- 2—**LEVIATHAN**  
(1) 325, parts unknown
- 3—**DAVID FLAIR**  
(15) 205, Charlotte, NC

- 4—**BULL BUCHANAN**  
(4) 325, Marietta, GA
- 5—**FLASH**  
(3) 225, Detroit, MI
- 6—**MARK HENRY**  
(-) 344, Austin, TX
- 7—**NICK DINSMORE**  
(6) 226, Jefferson, IN

- 8—**SEAN O'HAIRE**  
(11) 270, Hilton Head, SC
- 9—**ROB CONWAY**  
(9) 240, Pittsburgh, PA
- 10—**SHELTON BENJAMIN**  
(10) 245, Minneapolis, MN
- 11—**BIG BAD JOHN**  
(14) 320, New Orleans, LA

- 12—**DOUG BASHAM**  
(-) 241, Louisville, KY
- 13—**MARK JINDRAK**  
(13) 253, Auburn, NY
- 14—**REDD DOGG**  
(-) 240, Lafayette, LA
- 15—**TRAILER PARK TRASH**  
(-) 230, Nashville, TN

## JAPAN

- 1—**TOSHIAKI KAWADA**  
(8) 245, Ashikaga, Japan
- 2—**TADAO YASUDA**  
(-) 310, Tokyo, Japan
- 3—**JUN AKIYAMA**  
(2) 225, Hiroshima, Japan

- 4—**KEIJI MUTO**  
(1) 245, Yamanashi, Japan
- 5—**MITSU HARU MISAWA**  
(4) 228, Ashikaga, Japan
- 6—**MASA CHONO**  
(6) 235, Tokyo, Japan
- 7—**GENICHIRO TENRYU**  
(10) 235, Tokyo, Japan

- 8—**HIROYOSHI TENZAN**  
(11) 270, Tokyo, Japan
- 9—**YUJI NAGATA**  
(3) 228, Tokyo, Japan
- 10—**SHINYA HASHIMOTO**  
(-) 287, Gifu, Japan
- 11—**YOSHINARI OGAWA**  
(-) 202, Fichigi, Japan

- 12—**TAIYO KEA**  
(7) 235, Honolulu, HI
- 13—**VADER**  
(9) 450, Denver, CO
- 14—**KENSUKE SASAKI**  
(13) 251, Tokyo, Japan
- 15—**GREAT SASUKE**  
(14) 212, Tokyo, Japan

## MEXICO

- 1—**UNIVERSO DOS MIL**  
(15) 240, Mexico City, Mexico
- 2—**EL HIJO DEL SANTO**  
(1) 180, Tlancingo, Mexico
- 3—**LATIN LOVER**  
(5) 190, Monterrey, Mexico

- 4—**BLACK TIGER**  
(2) 193, Mexico City, Mexico
- 5—**SHOCKER**  
(6) 185, Guadalajara, Mexico
- 6—**HEAVY METAL**  
(-) 180, Mexico City, Mexico
- 7—**RAYO DE JALISCO JR.**  
(-) 270, Guadalajara, Mexico

- 8—**DR. WAGNER JR.**  
(14) 215, Mexico City, Mexico
- 9—**HECTOR GARZA**  
(9) 220, Monterrey, Mexico
- 10—**PERRO AGUAYO JR.**  
(-) 165, Zacatecas, Mexico
- 11—**NEGRO CASAS**  
(7) 175, Mexico City, Mexico

- 12—**TARZAN BOY**  
(-) 218, Mexico City, Mexico
- 13—**ULTIMO GUERRERO**  
(4) 173, Mexico City, Mexico
- 14—**MR. NIEBLA**  
(-) 185, Cuatitlan, Mexico
- 15—**CIBERNETICO**  
(8) 235, Mexico City, Mexico

## TOP 15 TAG TEAMS

- 1—**BILLY GUNN & CHUCK PALUMBO**  
(3) WWF World tag team champions
- 2—**TAIYO KEA & KEIJI MUTO**  
(2) All-Japan International tag team champions
- 3—**JEFF & MATT HARDY**  
(11) No. 1 contenders: WWF World tag title
- 4—**MASA CHONO & HIROYOSHI TENZAN**  
(7) IWGP International tag team champions
- 5—**BUH BUH RAY & D-VON DUDLEY**  
(4) No. 2 contenders: WWF World tag title

- 6—**HULK HOGAN & THE ROCK**  
(-) No. 3 contenders: WWF World tag title
- 7—**TAKESHI MORISHIMA & TAKESHI RIKIOH**  
(-) GHC tag team champions
- 8—**BRADSHAW & FAAROOQ**  
(6) No. 4 contenders: WWF World tag title
- 9—**SCOTT HALL & KEVIN NASH**  
(-) No. 5 contenders: WWF World tag title
- 10—**DOUG BASHAM & DAMAJA**  
(-) OVW Southern tag team champions

- 11—**ALBERT & SCOTTY TOO HOTTY**  
(9) No. 6 contenders: WWF World tag title
- 12—**2 COLD SCORPIO & VADER**  
(-) No. 1 contenders: GHC tag title
- 13—**YUJI NAGATA & MANABU NAKANISHI**  
(-) No. 1 contenders: IWGP International tag title
- 14—**STEVE BRADLEY & LANCE CADE**  
(-) HWA tag team champions
- 15—**GEDO & JADO**  
(13) IWGP junior tag team champions



*These ratings are compiled by the editors with the assistance of promoters, wrestlers, and reporters around the country, and are based on won-lost records for the past month, quality of opposition, and the inherent skill of each wrestler. The number in parentheses indicates a wrestler's position in that category last issue; (-) indicates that the wrestler was not rated in that category last issue ... Championships highlighted in bold on the "Roll Call Of Champions" have changed hands since our previous issue ... The information under the championship listing indicates the date that champion won the title, who the former champion was, and where the match took place.*

**For period ended March 27, 2002**

## ROLL CALL OF CHAMPIONS

**ALL-JAPAN INTERNATIONAL TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS:** TAIYO KEA & KEIJI MUTO  
(October 22, 2001; from Yoji Anjoh & Genichiro Tenryu; Niigata, Japan)

**ALL-JAPAN TRIPLE CROWN CHAMPION:** TOSHIAKI KAWADA  
(February 24, 2002; from Keiji Muto; Tokyo, Japan)

**BORDER CITY WRESTLING CAN-AM HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION:** JOHNNY SWINGER  
(November 27, 2001; won eight-man gauntlet match; Oldcastle, Ontario)

**BORDER CITY WRESTLING TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS:** CYRUS & TERRY TAYLOR  
(October 10, 2001; from Tyson Dux & Jack Damage; Oldcastle, Ontario)

**EAST COAST WRESTLING ASSOCIATION HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION:** SCOOT ANDREWS  
(May 5, 2001; beat Billy Fives in tournament final; Wilmington, DE)

**EAST COAST WRESTLING ASSOCIATION MID-ATLANTIC CHAMPION:** MOZART FONTAINE  
(April 7, 2001; from Glen Osbourne; Wilmington, DE)

**EAST COAST WRESTLING ASSOCIATION TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS:** AMERICAN DRAGON & LOW-KI  
(April 7, 2001; from Charlie & Russ Haas; Wilmington, DE)

**HEARTLAND WRESTLING ASSOCIATION HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION:** RACE STEELE  
(March 20, 2002; from Steven Richards; Cincinnati, OH)

**HEARTLAND WRESTLING ASSOCIATION TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS:** STEVE BRADLEY & LANCE CADE  
(February 20, 2002; from Mike Sanders in a stipulation match; Cincinnati, OH)

**IPW Hardcore WRESTLING HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION:** BILLY FIVES  
(December 8, 2001; from A.J. Styles; St. Petersburg, FL)

**IPW Hardcore WRESTLING TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS:** QUICKIE MART  
(December 8, 2001; from The Shane Twins; St. Petersburg, FL)

**IWF AMERICAN CHAMPION:** HADRIAN  
(February 23, 2002; won vacant title in fatal-four-way match, West Paterson, NJ)

**IWF HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION:** ROMAN  
(June 3, 2001; from Kevin Knight, West Orange, NJ)

**IWF TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS:** HADRIAN & DAMIAN ADAMS  
(September 16, 2001; from Rapid Fire Maldonado & Allison Danger; West Paterson, NJ)

**IWGP HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION:** TADAO YASUDA  
(February 16, 2002; beat Yuji Nagata in tournament final; Tokyo, Japan)

**IWGP INTERNATIONAL TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS:** MASA CHONO & HIROYOSHI TENZAN  
(March 24, 2002; beat Yuji Nagata & Manabu Nakanishi in tournament final; Amagasaki, Japan)

**IWGP JUNIOR HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION:** MINORU TANAKA  
(February 16, 2002; beat Masahito Kakihara; Tokyo, Japan)

**MARYLAND CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING CRUISERWEIGHT CHAMPION:** RED  
(March 27, 2002; from Qenaan Creed; Glen Burnie, MD)

**MARYLAND CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION:** THE BRUISER  
(February 16, 2002; from Orlando Jordan; Harrington, DE)

**MARYLAND CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS:** JOEY MATTHEWS & CHRISTIAN YORK  
(November 3, 2001; from Earl the Pearl & Rich Myers; Chestertown, MD)

**NATIONAL WRESTLING ALLIANCE HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION:** DAN SEVERN  
(March 9, 2002; from Shinya Hashimoto; Tokyo, Japan)

**NATIONAL WRESTLING ALLIANCE TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS:** JEFF DANIELS & TIM RENESTO  
(January 26, 2002; from The New Heavenly Bodies; Columbia, TN)

**NWA SOUTHWEST TEXAS HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION:** J.P. BLACK  
(March 22, 2002; beat Chaz Taylor for vacant title; North Richland Hills, TX)

**NWA SOUTHWEST TEXAS TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS:** LARRY GREEN & CHRIS YOUNG  
(February 22, 2002; from J.P. Black & Mike Thunder; North Richland Hills, TX)

**OHIO VALLEY WRESTLING HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION:** PROTOTYPE  
(February 20, 2002; from Leviathan; Jeffersonville, IN)

**OHIO VALLEY WRESTLING SOUTHERN TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS:** DOUG BASHAM & DAMAJA  
(February 6, 2002; from Rob Conway & Nick Dinsmore; Jeffersonville, IN)

**PRO WRESTLING NOAH GLOBAL HONORED CROWN CHAMPION:** JUN AKIYAMA  
(July 27, 2001; from Mitsuharu Misawa; Tokyo, Japan)

**PRO WRESTLING NOAH GLOBAL HONORED CROWN JUNIOR HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION:** NAOMICHI MARUFUJI  
(December 9, 2001; from Tatsuhiro Takaiva; Tokyo, Japan)

**PRO WRESTLING NOAH GLOBAL HONORED CROWN TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS:** TAKESHI MORISHIMA & TAKESHI RIKIOH  
(February 17, 2002; from Takao Omori & Yoshihiro Takayama; Tokyo, Japan)

**WWF CRUISERWEIGHT CHAMPION:** TAJIRI  
(October 22, 2001; from Billy Kidman; Kansas City, MO)

**WWF EUROPEAN CHAMPION:** WILLIAM REGAL  
(March 19, 2002; from Dallas Page; Ottawa, Ontario)

**WWF Hardcore CHAMPION:** RAVEN  
(March 26, 2002; from Maven; Philadelphia, PA)

**WWF INTERCONTINENTAL CHAMPION:** ROB VAN DAM  
(March 17, 2002; from William Regal; Toronto, Ontario)

**WWF LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION:** X-PAC  
(August 19, 2001; from Tajiri; San Jose, CA)

**WWF WOMEN'S CHAMPION:** JAZZ  
(February 4, 2002; from Trish Stratus; Las Vegas, NV)

**WWF WORLD CHAMPION:** TRIPLE-H  
(March 17, 2002; from Chris Jericho; Toronto, Ontario)

**WWF WORLD TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS:** BILLY GUNN & CHUCK PALUMBO  
(February 19, 2002; from Spike Dudley & Tazz; Rockford, IL)

**WORLD XTREME WRESTLING HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION:** SUGAA  
(March 2, 2002; From Samu; Hazleton, PA)

**WORLD XTREME WRESTLING TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS:** DA HIT SQUAD  
(February 10, 2002; From The Twin Tackles; Allentown, PA)





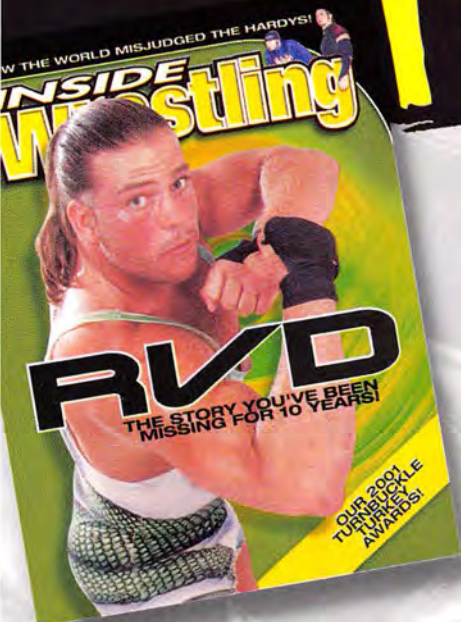
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